NATION

CEC for changing Sariska Tiger Reserve boundaries

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BUSINESS

50% copper tariffs to have limited impact on India

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SPORTS

5th Test: Gill's run out mars rain-hit day at the Oval

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SALAR

DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

سالار روزنامہ بنگلور

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Dayanand appointed as ADGP Prisons

BENGALURU, 31 JULY

Bengaluru police commissioner B Dayananda has been appointed as the additional director general of police (ADGP), Prisons, after the incumbent director general of police (Prisons), Malini Krishnamoorthy retired from his service. The State government revoked Dayananda's suspension prior to three days. He along with four other police officers were suspended following the stampede at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium here on 4 June, which killed 11 people and injured many. The government also revoked the suspension of Vikash Kumar, the additional commissioner of police (West), who had been assigned the responsibility of the stadium's security on the day of the incident. The suspensions orders were revoked pending disciplinary action against the officers.
—Agencies

3 time ex-TN CM OPS snaps ties with NDA after Stalin meet

CHENNAI, 31 JULY

Former Tamil Nadu chief minister O Panneerselvam-led AIADMK Cadres Rights Retrieval Committee on Thursday walked out of the BJP-led NDA coalition, a year after joining the bloc. Incidentally, the deposed AIADMK leader twice met DMK President and Chief Minister MK Stalin in the day. He later told reporters he was not insulted in NDA. Panruti S Ramachandran, a veteran leader and advisor to the Committee announced the decision to leave NDA. *—PTI*
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Nuns' arrests: Victim says coerced by Bajrang Dal

NARAYANPUR, 31 JUL

A victim of an alleged human trafficking and forceful conversion, in which two nuns have been arrested in Chhattisgarh, has alleged she was coerced and assaulted by Bajrang Dal activists to give a false statement, a charge denied by the right wing outfit. The police also did not record her statement properly, 21-year-old Kamleshwari Pradhan claimed, adding her family has been following Christianity for the last four-five years. The tribal woman, whose parents are farmers, also claimed the two nuns and another person arrested in the case were innocent and said they should be released from jail. *—PTI*
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The accused Sameer Kulkarni, Major (retired) Ramesh Upadhyay, Lt Col Prasad Purohit, Sudhakar Chaturvedi and Ajay Rahirkar *PHOTO: PTI*

17 yrs later, 7 get clean chit in Malegaon blast

Court says suspicion cannot take the place of real proof

MUMBAI, 31 JULY

A special NIA court in Mumbai on Thursday acquitted all seven accused in the 2008 Malegaon blast case, including former BJP MP Pragya Singh Thakur and Lt Col Prasad Purohit, stating there was "no reliable and cogent evidence" to support the charges.

The court held that terrorism has no religion and ruled that convictions cannot be based on mere perception or suspicion. "Mere suspicion cannot take the place of real proof," said Special Judge A K Lahoti, dismissing the application of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA).

> **I was arrested and tortured ... I am alive because I am a Sanyasi. They defamed bhagwa (saffron) through a conspiracy. Today, bhagwa has won, and Hindutva has won**
>
> —Pragya Thakur, ex-BJP MP

The blast on 29 September 2008 in Malegaon, a communally sensitive town in Maharashtra, killed six people and injured 101. An explosive device strapped to a motorcycle went off near a mosque during Ramadan. The prosecution had alleged the act was orchestrated by Right-wing extremists to terrorise Muslims.

The court, however, found gaps in the prosecution's case. It noted that the prosecution failed to prove that the motorbike allegedly used in the attack was registered in Thakur's name or that the explosive was planted on the vehicle. The accused also included Major Ramesh Upadhyay (Retd), Ajay Rahirkar, Sudhakar Dwivedi, Sudhakar Chaturvedi, and Sameer Kulkarni. All were charged under the UAPA, Indian Penal Code, and Arms Act. The case was initially probed by the Anti-Terrorism Squad, which linked the suspects to the 'Abhinav Bharat' group. *—PTI*
>>>More on Page 4

Trump seals oil deal with Pak

NEW YORK/ISLAMABAD, 31 JULY

In a dramatic turn of events, US President Donald Trump on Thursday unveiled a new trade agreement with Pakistan, pledging to help develop the country's "massive oil reserves", while simultaneously slapping a 25 per cent "reciprocal tariff" and penalties on India for its Russian arms and oil purchases.

In a snub, Trump hinted Pakistan might one day "sell oil to India", highlighting growing tensions with New Delhi.

Trump, who called Pakistan's energy potential "massive", did not specify which reserves he meant. While Pakistan has long claimed untapped coastal oil deposits, previous exploration efforts have yielded little. In March 2019, then-prime minister Imran Khan announced a "possible massive find" offshore, touted as Asia's largest. However, Pakistan's Petroleum Division later denied the claim. A 2024 report in Dawn confirmed that ExxonMobil, ENI, Pakistan Petroleum Limited, and Oil & Gas Development Company Limited had drilled beyond 5,500 metres without success. "The drilling work has now been abandoned," a government official told DawnNewsTV.

Just hours after the announcement, prominent Baloch human rights advocate Mir Yar Baloch wrote to the US President, warning that Pakistan's military leadership had misrepresented the "true geography and ownership" of the country's natural resources.

Baloch leaders are saying that the oil reserves are in Balochistan and Pakistan has no rights on taking them.

The agreement, finalised in Washington with Pakistani Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb, US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick, and Trade Representative Jamieson Greer, includes reduced tariffs on Pakistani exports and enhanced cooperation in energy, minerals, IT, cryptocurrency, and more.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif hailed the deal as "historic", calling it a new chapter in US-Pakistan relations. Meanwhile, Trump labelled India's trade policies "strenuous and obnoxious", linking its BRICS affiliation to anti-US interests. The new tariffs on India take effect from 1 August. *—PTI*
>>>More on Page 3

RAHUL ENDORSES TRUMP'S 'DEAD ECONOMY THEORY'

US President Donald Trump once again mounted a sharp attack on India and Russia for their close ties and said that the two countries can take their "dead economies down together".

"I don't care what India does with Russia. They can take their dead economies down together, for all I care," he said.

Echoing Trump's criticism, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said everybody except Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman know that the country's economy is "dead".

> **In less than a decade, India came out of 'Fragile Five' economies and it has now become the fastest-growing economy of the world...It is expected that we would be the third largest economy in a few years**
>
> —Piyush Goyal, Trade Minister

> **Maybe he (Trump) should recall his favorite movies about 'the walking dead,' and also remember how dangerous the so-called 'Dead Hand,' which doesn't even exist, could be**
>
> —Dmitry Medvedev, Deputy Chairman of Russia's Security Council

US ANNOUNCES

50%

TARIFF ON COPPER; NO IMPACT ON INDIA.

>>>MORE ON PG7

US SANCTIONS

6 INDIAN

COMPANIES OVER IRANIAN PETROLEUM

>>>MORE ON PG3

A GLANCE AT PAK'S OIL RESERVES

- 353.5M barrels: Total of oil reserve.
- Ranks 52nd in world.
- Has 0.021% of world's total reserves.
- Rs 272.15: Petrol per litre.
- Rs 284.35: Diesel per litre.

VS INDIA

- 472.8M barrel: Total of oil reserve.
- Ranks 24th in world.
- Has 0.29% of world's total reserves.
- Rs 94.77: Petrol per litre.
- Rs 87.67: Diesel per litre.

Decide in 3 months: SC to Speaker on BRS MLAs

NEW DELHI, 31 JULY

The Supreme Court has directed the Telangana Assembly Speaker to decide within three months on disqualification petitions against 10 BRS MLAs who defected to the ruling Congress. The Court emphasised that unchecked political defections can destabilise democracy.

A bench led by Chief Justice B R Gavai criticised the Speaker's prolonged inaction, noting no notices had been issued for nearly seven months. "Non-issuance of notice for such a long period cannot be seen as expeditious," the Court remarked, stressing that delays defeat the purpose of the Speaker's role under the Tenth Schedule.

The Tenth Schedule of the Constitution addresses disqualification on grounds of defection. The Court reaffirmed that the Speaker acts as a tribunal in such matters and does not enjoy constitutional immunity from judicial review.

The bench allowed appeals by BRS leaders, including Padi Kaushik Reddy, and overturned a Telangana High Court division bench order from 22 November 2024, which had interfered with a prior single-judge ruling.

"If we do not issue any directions, it will amount to the Speaker repeating the widely criticised situation of 'operation successful, patient dead'," the CJI said, urging swift action in the interest of democratic integrity. *—PTI*
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SIT FINDS SKELETAL REMAINS AT 6TH SITE IN DHARMASTHALA

MANGALURU, 31 JULY

The Special Investigation Team (SIT) probing the alleged mass burials in the temple town of Dharmasthala has recovered skeletal remains believed to be part of a larger ossuary from the sixth site. The site was identified by the primary complainant in the case, a sanitation worker who claimed to have buried hundreds of bodies. According to SIT sources, the latest excavation at point number 6 yielded significant human remains. While the complete bodies have not yet been recovered, certain parts including skull fragments have been found. *—PTI*
>>>More on Page 2

Drunk man kills mom & burns body, sleeps beside her in K'taka

CHIKKAMAGALURU, 31 JULY

A 28-year-old drunk man killed his mother with a sickle, partially burnt her body, and slept beside it through the night. The accused, Pavan, 28, was arrested by Aldur police on Thursday morning.

Pavan, an alcoholic, lived with his parents, Bhavani, 52 and Somegowda, in a small rented house. All three were daily wage labourers. On Wednesday night, after his parents refused to give him money for alcohol, Pavan allegedly threatened them with a sickle. In an intoxicated rage, he threw the weapon at his mother, killing her.

After confirming she was dead, he lay down next to the body and later set it on fire inside the same room. His father fled the scene immediately after the attack.

Neighbours alerted the police after noticing smoke and a burning smell. Officers found Pavan asleep beside the half-burnt body. He was taken into custody.

According to police, Somegowda returned home on Thursday evening, police said. *—Salar News*

DEPORTATION FIASCO

Decide whether Rohingyas are refugees or illegal entrants: SC

NEW DELHI, 31 JULY

The Supreme Court on Thursday said the first major issue to be dealt with in cases concerning Rohingyas is whether they are refugees or illegal entrants.

The court observed this while hearing a batch of pleas concerning Rohingyas in the country.

"The first major issue is simple, are they refugees or illegal entrants," the bench observed.

It took note of the broad issues that arose for its consideration in the pleas relating to Rohingyas.

"Whether the Rohingyas are entitled to be declared as refugees? If so, what protections, privileges or rights they are entitled to?" the bench said.

It said the second issue is if the Rohingyas are not refugees and are illegal entrants, whether the action of the Centre and states in deporting them was justified.

The other issue is whether the detained Rohingyas living in refugee camps, have access to basic amenities like drinking water, sanitation and education.

The court will lay the principles concerning the State's responsibility to deport those who were found to be illegal entrants. SC had rapped some petitioners, who had claimed that 43 Rohingya refugees were dropped in the Andaman sea for deportation to Myanmar.

It had questioned the authenticity of the material placed before it and refused to stay any further deportation of Rohingyas. The court had remarked that the identity cards issued by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees may not be of any help to them under the laws. *—PTI*

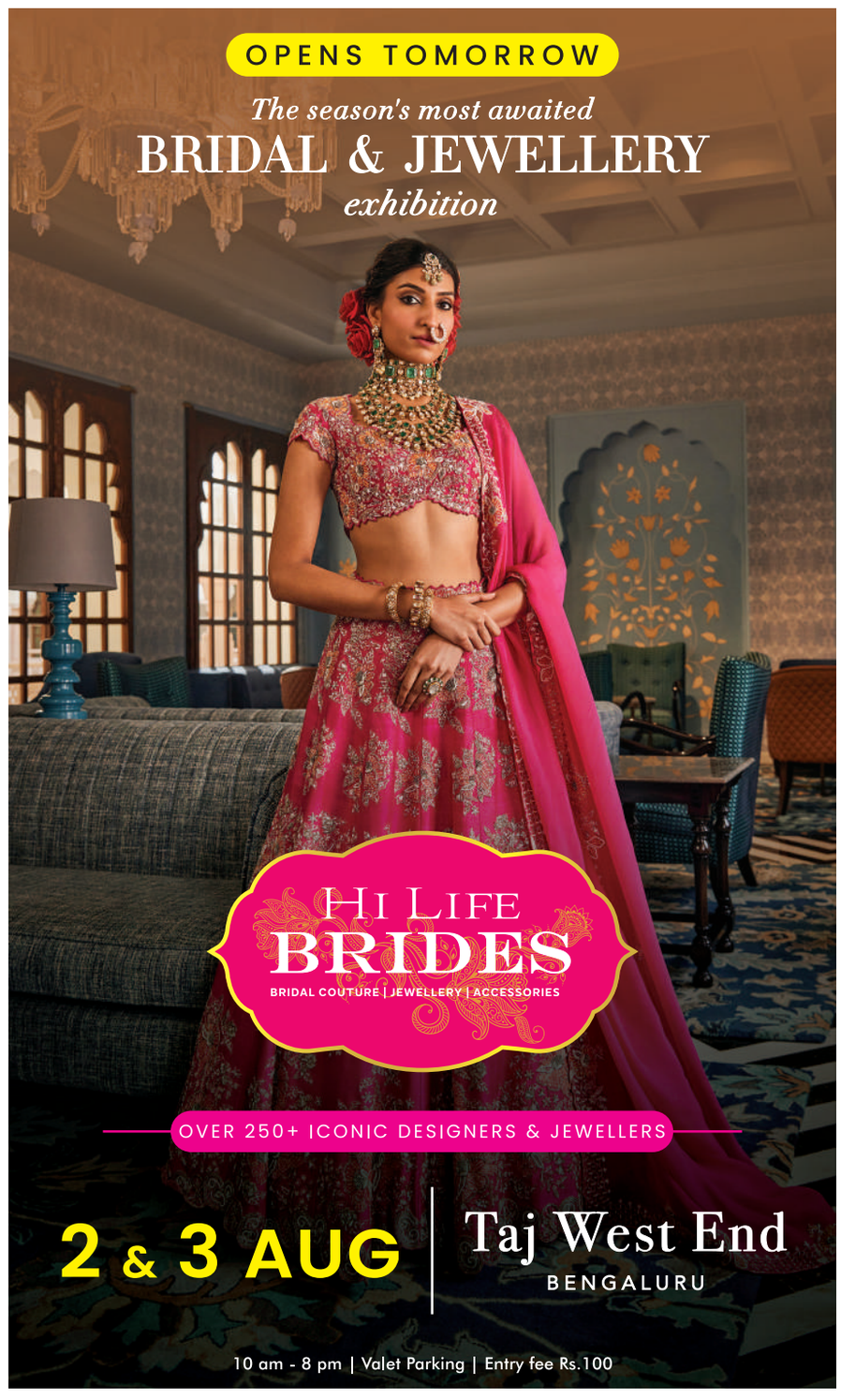


PHOTO: FREEPIK

BJP MP demands action on stray dogs

BENGALURU, 31 JULY

BJP Rajya Sabha MP Lahar Singh has called upon the State government to prioritise public safety over what he described as "hollow welfare experiments," following the death of a senior citizen in a suspected stray dog attack in Bengaluru. In a strongly worded statement, Singh said over 2.6 lakh dog bite cases have been reported across State, with over 10,000 in City alone last week. "Caring for animals is noble, but citizen safety is non-negotiable," he stated. Criticising the Congress-led government for focusing on proposals like dog meal menus while public spaces remain unsafe, Singh pointed out that even the National Military Memorial near his office is affected. "This 'dog guarantee' is not governance; it's a distraction," he said. *—Salar News*

State gets Rs 1,000 cr quantum boost

This will create 10,000 high-skilled jobs as State aims to be a powerhouse by 2035

BENGALURU, 31 JULY

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Thursday announced the Karnataka Quantum Mission (KQM), backed by a Rs 1,000 crore fund, to build a USD 20 billion quantum economy in the State. This will be part of the State's Quantum Vision 2035, he said.

Siddaramaiah was addressing the inaugural event of the first edition of the 'Quantum India Bengaluru' summit, organised by the Karnataka Science and Technology Promotion Society (KSTePS), Department of Science & Technology in collaboration with IISc Quantum Technology Initiative (IQTI).

"As the world celebrates 2025 as the International Year of Quantum, I am proud to announce Karnataka's Quantum Vision 2035. By 2035, we aim to create 10,000 high-skilled jobs and establish Karnataka as the Quantum Capital of Asia," he added. According to him, KQM will promote R&D, skilling, infrastructure, and startups.

"A Quantum Technology Task Force will guide policy, while dedicated quantum parks, manufacturing zones, and Q-City will foster innovation," he added.

Siddaramaiah sid that that Karnataka's quantum strategy is built on five key pillars — talent development, R&D, infrastructure creation, industry support and global partnerships.

To achieve talent development, Siddaramaiah said State will introduce quantum skilling programmes in at least 20 colleges and support 150 PhD fellowships every year.

He added that the State also aims to develop cutting-edge quantum systems, including 1000-qubit processors, and pilot real-world applications in healthcare, defence and cybersecurity. As for infrastructure, State will establish India's first Quantum Hardware Park, four Innovation Zones, and a dedicated Fab line to boost domestic manufacturing of quantum components, he added.

Future plans include nurturing more than 100 startups, facilitating patent filings, as well as launching a Quantum Venture Capital Fund to help startups scale. He also said State's integrated quantum hub, or Q-City, will position India as a global leader. *—PTI*

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and others during the inaugural Quantum summit in Bengaluru; Physics Nobel laureates Prof Duncan Haldane (UK) and Prof David Gross (US) were felicitated ***PHOTO: MOHAMMAD ASAD***

We welcome IT firms leaving Maharashtra: DKS

BENGALURU, 31 JULY

All the quantum tech players who want to leave Maharashtra will be welcomed to set up their facilities in City, Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar said on Thursday. In City, we have enough human resources as well as infrastructure, he added.

"We are ready to provide whatever they need," Shivakumar said on the sidelines of the inaugural event of the Quantum India Bengaluru 2025.

"The Deputy Chief Minister of Maharashtra had made a statement a few days ago that IT companies are moving from Maharashtra to Bengaluru. I would like to thank him for saying that," Shivakumar remarked.

On 26 July, Deputy Chief Minister of Maharashtra, Ajit Pawar caused a flutter by revealing that Hinjewadi IT Park in Pune is "moving out" to City and Hyderabad. A video of Pawar's angry outburst while inspecting civic works in Pimpri Chinchwad has gone viral. "We are ruined. The entire IT park of Hinjewadi is moving out. It's going out of Pune, out of Maharashtra to Bengaluru, Hyderabad, don't you care at all?"

—Salar News

Two injured in leopard attack at Chikkamagaluru

CHIKKAMAGALURU, 31 JULY

Two people were injured and one escaped unhurt following a leopard attack in Yammedoddi village near Sakarayapattana in Kaduru taluk in Chikkamagaluru. The incident occurred Thursday morning as Murthanna and Manjanna returned home; Murthanna lost his thumb on his left hand, while Manjanna sustained injuries to his hands. The leopard attacked near the village, causing panic among residents who screamed and fled. Hundreds gathered at Madagara Kere hill, where the leopard later tried to attack another person, who narrowly escaped after loud screams and villagers throwing stones. Kadur residents urged the forest department to act swiftly and return the leopard to the forest. *—SALAR NEWS*

Skeletal remains found at 6th spot in Dharmasthala

DHARMASTHALA, 31 JULY

Skeletal remains have been discovered in Dharmasthala. This is the first such discovery, after the Special Investigation Team (SIT) probing the case, reportedly found nothing at the first five sites near the Netravathi river.

Bones from two skeletons were reportedly recovered. However, the complete bodies have not yet been recovered — only certain body parts, including skull fragments, have been found. Excavation is continuing deeper in search of the remaining parts.

Officers have recovered bones from the pit. As per procedure, the bones found at the 6th point will be sent for forensic examination (FSL testing).

The case stems from the testimony of a former sanitation worker, who alleged that between 1995 and 2014, he buried "hundreds" of bodies in Dharmasthala, some of which, he claimed, showed signs of sexual violence.

The accused had provided information about 13 locations.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Thursday said that senior IPS officer Pronab Mohanty, who is heading the SIT, will be replaced if he goes on central government duty.

Earlier, Home Minister G Parameshwara said the government has not taken any decision yet on Mohanty.

There has been speculation that Mohanty – Director General of Police (Internal Security Division) – who has found a place in the list of empanelment of Director General-rank officers to serve in the Union government, will be replaced. *—PTI*

The skeletal remains being sealed in a bag so that they can be given to the forensics team; Officials with the complainant, a former sanitation worker whose identity is being shielded for safety reasons, in Dharmasthala, on Thursday ***PHOTO: SALAR***

Internal reservation: HM to meet SC legislators, ministers

BENGALURU, 31 JULY

Home Minister G Parameshwara on Thursday said he has called a meeting of Congress legislators and ministers from the Scheduled Castes, ahead of the Justice HN Nagmohan Das Commission submitting its report, aimed at providing internal reservation among SCs in the State. He said the meeting is aimed at gathering the opinions from various SC sub-castes, and to ensure that there is no confusion. The meeting is likely to take place of 2 August, ahead of Justice Das Commission submitting its report on 4 August.

Asked about whether it was a dinner meeting, he said, "Dinner or lunch or coffee meeting, we will do something." *—PTI*

'No proof Rajanna was honey trapped'

BENGALURU, 31 JULY

The CID report reportedly found no evidence of honeytrapping of ministers and public representatives in the State, including Congress MLA KN Rajanna. The CID submitted its report to the State government as well as the Union Home Ministry. Rajanna reportedly couldn't identify the accused.

The controversy erupted on 20 March, when Congress MLA Rajanna told the Assembly that attempts were made to honeytrap him, and at least 48 politicians had fallen victim to similar acts.

However, the State government said it had not yet gone through the report.

"The CID has submitted its report, but I have not gone through it yet. You (media) picked up the matter and the CID responded, but I have not seen their reply yet," Home Minister G Parameshwara said.

He added that there was nothing to hide and that the report would be made public after a review.

The Opposition BJP termed the exercise an eyewash.

"So, what's the value of a minister's statement made inside the Assembly? He didn't say it on the road, but inside the House," BJP leader R Ashoka said. Ashoka also pointed out that Rajanna's son had lodged a complaint, claiming that an attempt had been made on him as well.

"Yet the report now says no such thing happened. If we had known the Congress would cover it up, we wouldn't have raised the issue in the Assembly," Ashoka alleged.

—Salar News with Agencies

MUDA case: Justice Desai submits report to govt

BENGALURU, 31 JULY

Retired High Court judge justice PN Desai, who investigated the alleged irregularities in the Mysuru Urban Development Authority, submitted a report to the State Chief Secretary Shalini Rajneesh on Thursday.

The State government has constituted a one-man Commission headed by retired High Court judge Justice Desai on 14 July to inquire into the alleged MUDA site allocation scam.

The details of the report have not yet been made public.

Allegations of a scam gathered steam after the BJP alleged that Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's wife Parvathi was one of the beneficiaries of alternative plots allotted in lieu of land given to Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA).

Siddaramaiah categorically rejected the allegation. *—PTI*

CITY HOUSE COLLAPSES

At least a 50-year-old building collapsed at Sampangi Ram Nagar in City on Thursday, injuring one person. The person was reportedly rescued by a mason who was nearby ***PHOTO: MOHAMMAD ASAD***

Mangaluru man gets to 20 years for raping minor

MANGALURU, 31 JULY

A Mangaluru court has sentenced 30-year-old Mansoor, also known as Mohammad Mansoor or Zabeer, to 20 years' rigorous imprisonment for the rape of a 16-year-old girl. The Fast Track Special Court also imposed a Rs 50,000 fine. Additionally, Mansoor received a one-year sentence and Rs 5,000 fine under IPC Section 506 for criminal intimidation. The case, registered on 23 December, 2023, followed allegations that Mansoor raped and threatened the girl on 30 May, 2023, recording the assault on video. He was arrested on 2 July, 2024, after evading arrest for eight months. Judge Manu KS delivered the verdict on 30 July, 2025, after hearing arguments from prosecutors. *—PTI*

TO REVISIT LABOUR LAWS

State calls TCS layoffs 'alarming'; summons company officials

BENGALURU, 31 JULY

State Labour Minister Santosh Lad said that Tata Consultancy Services' (TCS) decision to lay of over 12,000 employees was "alarming," saying the government will look into leniency laws given to Sunrise Industries.

"Something unique this is because all of a sudden 12,000 people, that too TCS, is a very huge number... it is an alarming one; our people are talking to them... I will also get to know the reason beyond it... will look into labour law ... leniency has always been given to sunrise companies," Lad said. "Will look into labour law leniency given to sunrise companies".

"Our department has called TCS officials just to have consultation to know the reason," Lad added.

This comes as the Labour Department reportedly sent a notice to the company after the Karnataka State IT/ITeS Employees Union (KITU) filed a case of an industrial dispute.

KITU representatives had met Additional Labour Commissioner G Manjunath, over the "illegal mass retrenchment," and demanded prosecution of the management.

KITU also demanded the initiation of criminal proceedings against the officials forcing employees to resign.

KITU said that it received several complaints from TCS employees claiming that the management was pressurising them to resign. It urged the employees not to give in to the "criminal" pressure

—Salar News with agencies

33L litres of used cooking oil sent to biodiesel units

BENGALURU, 31 JULY

A total of 32.69 lakh litres of used cooking oil were collected across State during the financial years 2024-25 and 2025-26 and routed to biodiesel manufacturing units under the FSSAI's RUCO (Repurpose Used Cooking Oil) initiative, officials said on Thursday. The information was shared during a video conference chaired by the Commissioner of Food Safety and Drug Administration, Bengaluru, on 30 July, the department said. The representatives of the RUCO agency were asked to step up efforts to collect more used oil and ensure its diversion to biodiesel units. Hotel and bakery owners present at the meeting were strictly warned against reusing oil and were directed to hand it over to RUCO agencies. *—PTI*

MES meets Fadnavis over compulsory Kannada

BENGALURU, 31 JULY

Pro-Maharashtrian organisation, Maharashtra Ekikaran Samiti on Thursday met Maharashtra Chief Minister, Devendra Fadnavis at Mumbai and submitted a memorandum to him, raising the issue of the Karnataka government making Kannada compulsory in disputed places in the State.

A delegation headed by Belagavi City Corporation member, Ravi Salunkhe told Fadnavis that State was forcing Marathis in border areas to learn Kannada.

The delegation requested Fadnavis to raise the matter in the Assembly to solve the issue.

The organisation claimed that the National Commission for Linguistic Minorities had asked the State government to give the official recognition to the languages of communities which comprise over 14 per cent of the State's total population. *—Salar News*

RaGa has proof of vote theft: CM; DKS notes pvt firm's role

BENGALURU, 31 JULY

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said that Congress leader Rahul Gandhi has evidence for his allegation regarding the modus operandi for "vote theft" during Lok Sabha polls in the State last year.

Amid the row over the revision of electoral rolls in Bihar, Gandhi on 23 July had claimed his party has figured out the modus operandi by studying a constituency in State.

"Gandhi has got evidence. He is coming here to protest and to meet the Election Commission officials," Siddaramaiah said.

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar said, "BJP did election fraud using data collected by private firm Chilume. Our national leaders will talk about it."

He said that it was not a padyatara. "We will hold the protest at the Freedom Park and then travel to the Election Commission's office to submit an appeal. All the party leaders and workers will participate in the protest."

Shivakumar said there were issues in Mahadevapura and Gandhinagar constituencies.

—Salar News with Agencies

CM Siddaramaiah, DyCM DK Shivakumar, AICC General Secretary Randeep Singh Surjewala and others during the preparatory meeting for Rahul Gandhi's visit at KPCC office on Thursday ***PHOTO: MOHAMMAD ASAD***

PHOTO: PTI

Electoral College for vice president poll finalised

NEW DELHI, 31 JULY

The Election Commission on Thursday said it has finalised the Electoral College for the vice presidential election, necessitated due to the resignation of Jagdeep Dhankhar from the post. In a statement, the poll authority said it has finalized the Electoral College list for the Vice Presidential Election, 2025. The Electoral College list will be available for purchase at a counter set up in the EC office from the date of notification, which is likely to be announced soon, the poll body said. Dhankhar, 74, resigned as vice president on 21 July, a little more than two years before his tenure was due to end, in 2027.*—PTI*

Cabinet approves Rs 1,920 cr boost for PMKSY

NEW DELHI, 31 JULY

The Union Cabinet has increased the budget for the flagship scheme Pradhan Mantri Kisan Sampada Yojana (PMKSY) by Rs 1,920 crore, taking the total allocation to Rs 6,520 crore. The additional funds will be utilised this fiscal year for establishing 50 multi-product food irradiation units and 100 food testing laboratories. The decision was made during a meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA), chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. I&B Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw stated, "The outlay of PMKSY has been increased to Rs 6,520 crore." Launched in 2017, the scheme was extended for one more year until the end of 2025-26 with a provisional allocation of Rs 4,600 crore. The Cabinet's move aims to bolster the food processing sector as part of the government's broader development agenda. *—PTI*

CBFC denies certificate to film on UP CM Yogi

MUMBAI, 31 JULY

The makers of 'Ajey: The Untold Story of a Yogi, a film based on the life of Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, have approached the Bombay High Court challenging the Central Board of Film Certification's (CBFC) decision to deny it certification. The court asked why the applications was rejected when the novel, 'The Monk Who Became Chief Minister', which inspired the film, was publicly available. It issued a notice to the CBFC, seeking its reply. The makers had approached the HC, seeking a direction to the censor board to decide on their applications. CBFC had said that it would take a decision within two days. *—PTI*

PHOTO: INSTAGRAM

TN techie honour killing: Partner defends her kin

CHENNAI, 31 JULY

A young woman from an Oppressor caste in Tamil Nadu, whose romantic partner was killed recently in an alleged case of caste killing, has spoken up. Investigation into the murder of Kavin Selvaganesh, a techie from the Dalit community, has been transferred to the CID. Addressing the allegations in a video statement, she insisted that her parents were not involved in Kavin's death. The victim was last seen with her brother, Surjith, before being found dead. Surjith has surrendered and faces murder and caste atrocity charges. Her father, a police officer, has been arrested; her mother, also in the force, has been suspended. *—AGENCIES*

India, Russia are dead economies: Trump

US has also sanctioned 6 Indian companies for trade of Iranian petrochemical products

WASHINGTON/ NEW YORK, 31 JULY

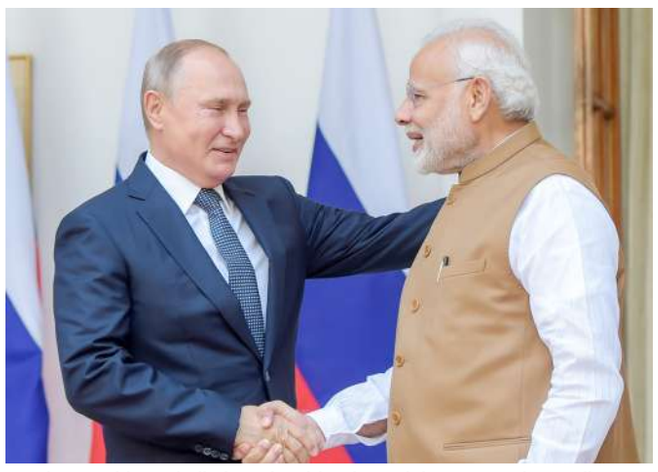
US President Donald Trump once again mounted a sharp attack on India and Russia for their close ties and said that the two countries can take their "dead economies down together".

His fresh criticism of New Delhi and Moscow came on Thursday, hours after announcing 25 per cent tariffs against India, plus a "penalty" for its trade with Russia.

"I don't care what India does with Russia. They can take their dead economies down together, for all I care. We have done very little business with India, their Tariffs are too high, among the highest in the World," he said.

The surprise announcement came a day after Indian officials said that a US trade team would visit from 25 August to negotiate a trade deal.

Trump's announcement is being seen as a pressure tactic to get New Delhi to agree to demands made by the US, which has, in recent days, got favourable trade deals with major partners like Japan, the UK and the European Union.



Russian President Vladimir Putin with Prime Minister Narendra Modi *PHOTO: PTI*

- Multiple companies in India, the UAE, Türkey and Indonesia are being designated for their significant sales and purchases of Iranian-origin petrochemical products, it said.The India-based companies being designated include Kanchan Polymers, Alchemical Solutions and Ramniklal S Gosalia & Co.

Trump termed India's trade policies as "most strenuous and obnoxious".

The penalty was announced as India has made large purchases of oil and military equipment from Russia. India is the first country to face a penalty for Russian imports.

He said India has always purchased a significant amount of military equipment and energy products from Russia at a time when everyone wants Russia to stop the "killing" in Ukraine.

US has also sanctioned six Indian companies for their "significant" sales and purchases of Iranian-origin petrochemical products.

"The Iranian regime continues to fuel conflict in the Middle East to fund its destabilising activities," the Department of State said on Wednesday, as it announced imposing sanctions on 20 global entities.

Multiple companies in India, the United Arab Emirates, Türkey and Indonesia are being designated for their significant sales and purchases of Iranian-origin petrochemical products, it said.

The India-based companies being designated include Kanchan Polymers, Alchemical Solutions and Ramniklal S Gosalia & Co.

The companies are being designated for knowingly engaging in a significant transaction for the purchase, acquisition, sale, transport or marketing of the petrochemical products from Iran. *—PTI*

TRUMP'S TARIFFS FIASCO

Parliament must decide on Speaker's right in MLA disqualification, says SC

NEW DELHI, 31 JULY

PHOTO: PTI

The Supreme Court has stated that it is for Parliament to devise a mechanism to address delays by Speakers in deciding disqualification petitions under the Tenth Schedule, amid growing concerns over political defections undermining democracy.

"Though we do not possess any advisory jurisdiction, it is for Parliament to consider whether entrusting the Speaker with the task of deciding disqualifications is effectively combating defections," the SC said, and urged lawmakers to review whether the current process is fit for purpose in safeguarding democratic principles.

The verdict came while allowing appeals filed by BRS leaders, seeking directions for expedited decisions on disqualification pleas against 10 MLAs who defected to the ruling Congress. The Court set aside the Telangana HC's 2024 order, which had interfered with a ruling from September 2024.

Referring to parliamentary speeches by Rajesh Pilot and Devendra Nath Munshi, the Court reiterated that Speakers were entrusted with this role to avoid judicial delays. However, it noted that the Telangana Speaker had not issued notices for nearly seven months — a delay it deemed unjustifiable.

The Court rejected pleas for it to directly decide the disqualification cases, citing precedent, but warned the Speaker not to allow MLAs to drag proceedings. It said adverse inferences could be drawn if delays continue.

Speaker Gaddam Prasad Kumar said he would consult legal experts upon receiving the official judgment. The top court also criticised Telangana CM Revanth Reddy's comments in the Assembly claiming there would be no bypolls. *—PTI*

OPS cuts ties with NDA ahead of 2026 polls

CHENNAI, 31 JULY

Former Tamil Nadu Chief Minister O Panneerselvam-led AIADMK Cadres Rights Retrieval Committee on Thursday walked out of the BJP-led NDA coalition, a year after joining the bloc.

Incidentally, the deposed AIADMK leader twice met DMK President and Chief Minister MK Stalin in the day. He later told reporters he was not insulted in NDA.

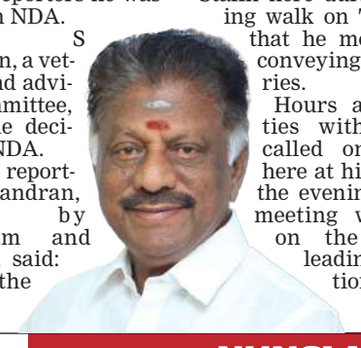
Panruti S Ramachandran, a veteran leader and advisor to the Committee, announced the decision to leave NDA.

Speaking to reporters, Ramachandran, flanked by Panneerselvam and panel leaders, said: "Hereafter, the Committee will not be a part of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA)."

The decision to move away from the NDA was unanimous, he said, answering a question.Asked on the reasons for quitting NDA, Ramachandran said the reason was widely known and there was no necessity to explain it.

To a question, he said he met Stalin here during his morning walk on Thursday and that he moved on after conveying his pleasantries.

Hours after severing ties with NDA, OPS called on CM Stalin here at his residence in the evening, his second meeting with the CM on the same day, leading to speculations. *—PTI*



National interest first, says Goyal

NEW DELHI, 31 JULY

India will take all necessary steps to safeguard and promote national interest, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said on Thursday, a day after US President Donald Trump announced 25 per cent tariffs plus penalty on domestic exports to America from 1 August.

In a statement in both the Houses of Parliament, he said, the government is examining the implications of these tariffs and is in consultation with all stakeholders on the tariffs.

"The Government attaches the utmost importance to protecting and promoting the welfare of our farmers, workers, entrepreneurs, exporters, MSMEs and all sections of industry. We will take all necessary steps to secure and advance our national interest," he said.

Trump's surprise announcement came ahead of a US trade team visiting India from 25 August for the sixth round of negotiations for the proposed bilateral trade agreement.

Goyal's remarks are important as India has hardened its stance on giving duty concessions to the US on agriculture and dairy sectors – a key demand of America in the trade talks with India. India is seeking import duty concessions from the US for its labour-intensive sectors like gems & jewellery and others, besides auto parts.

The two countries are negotiating a bilateral trade agreement from March with an aim to more than double the bilateral trade in goods and services to USD 500 billion by 2030 from current USD 191 billion. *—PTI*

Union Minister Piyush Goyal speaks in the Rajya Sabha during the Monsoon session of Parliament, in New Delhi *PHOTO: PTI*

'PM, FM delulu over economy'

NEW DELHI, 31 JULY

> **I think the US may have some illusions about finding oil in Pakistan. And I wish them luck**
>
> -Shashi Tharoor, Congress MP

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Thursday said everybody except Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman knows that India is a "dead economy", as he alleged that the BJP-led government has destroyed India's economic, defence & foreign policies.

Speaking with reporters in the Parliament House complex, Gandhi also claimed that a trade deal with the US will happen and Trump will define it, while PM will do what the Trump tells him to do.

Congress MP Shashi Tharoor on Thursday said the US announcing the imposition of 25 per cent tariff and penalties on India may be just a "bargaining tactic" as trade negotiations are on, and asserted that "we must give strong support to our negotiators" to find the best possible deal. He also said if a good deal is not possible, "we may have to walk away".

Taking a swipe at Modi, Congress Chief Mallikarjun Kharge on Thursday said the PM had observed a "maun vrat" in Parliament on Trump's India-Pakistan ceasefire claims, and asked whether he will remain silent on the US leader's baseless allegations on India.

He said the nation comes first and "we are always with the nation". *—PTI*

Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi in the House, in New Delhi, on Thursday *PHOTO: PTI*

Rajya Sabha, Lok Sabha adjourned amid Opposition's uproar on SIR

NEW DELHI, 31 JULY

Both the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha's proceedings were adjourned for the day on Thursday, soon after Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal made a statement on the imposition of 25 per cent tariff by the US on India as Opposition members continued their protest over voter list revision exercise in Bihar. The protesting MPs rushed to the well and raised slogans demanded a discussion on Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls in Bihar. With the opposition MPs not relenting, both the Houses were adjourned. *—PTI*

Insinuation, distortion: Congress slams Shah for remark on Afzal Guru

NEW DELHI, 31 JULY

Congress leader P Chidambaram criticised Home Minister Amit Shah's claim that the death sentence of Parliament attack convict Afzal Guru was delayed because of him. Shah stated in Rajya Sabha that Guru's execution could not proceed while Chidambaram was home minister. He dismissed it and clarified, "Afzal Guru's mercy petition was pending from October 2006 until it was rejected in 2013, & the law states a death sentence cannot be carried out until the petition is disposed of." *—PTI*

NUNS' ARREST

Victim alleges coercion by Bajrang Dal, says nuns innocent

NARAYANPUR, 31 JULY

A 21-year-old tribal woman, Kamleshwari Pradhan, who claims to be a victim of alleged human trafficking and forced conversion in Chhattisgarh, has accused Bajrang Dal activists of coercing and assaulting her to give a false statement.

The right-wing organisation has denied the allegations.

Pradhan, whose family has been practising Christianity for the last four to five years, said she was not trafficked but was travelling to Agra voluntarily with two nuns, Preethi Mary and Vandana Francis, from Kerala, and Sukhman Mandavi. She recounted reaching Durg railway station early on 25 July, where she was confronted by Bajrang Dal members and threatened, abused, and assaulted. She alleged that a woman, Jyoti Sharma, who identified as a right-wing activist, slapped her and pressured her to change her statement, warning her that her brother could be jailed or beaten if she did not comply.

Sister Preethi Mary and sister Vandana Francis *PHOTO: ANI*

Pradhan claimed police did not record her true statement, stating, "When I tried to speak, they told me to be quiet and asked if I wanted to go home." She also denied the accusations of conversion.

She appealed for the release of the nuns and Mandavi, asserting their innocence. The arrest has sparked political controversy, with opposition parties criticising the move, while Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai accused critics of politicising the case.

A Durg court recently stated it lacked jurisdiction to hear bail applications, which must be filed with a special NIA court. *—PTI*

Bengal govt to give ₹1.10L to each Durg Puja panel

KOLKATA, 31 JULY

PHOTO: ANI

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee addressed a coordination meeting with the organisers of the Durga Puja Community in Kolkata on Thursday.

She announced Rs 1,10,000 as a grant to each Durga Puja committee in the state.

Addressing a huge gathering, Mamata Banerjee said, "We organise this meeting every year ahead of the Durga puja for proper coordination, and there should be no shortcomings in traffic arrangements, drinking water, health facilities, or electricity."

"People from every religion are included, as there is a culture in Bengal. We participate in cultural festivals of every religion," she added.

Addressing allegations that she doesn't allow Durga Puja celebrations, the TMC supremo said, "The fact is that Saraswati Puja is conducted in every home. There are no festivals which are not conducted here.

Mamata also announced that idol immersion will take place from 2-4 October.

- The West Bengal CM announced an 80 per cent concession in electricity bills for the puja committees.

"Mobile patrolling team, quick response team, drone, CCTV, all facilities will have to be provided. The police control room will work for 24 hours. A stampede-like situation should be averted," she said. The CM announced an 80 per cent concession in electricity bills for committees.

She said that a one-window system is available for NOC-related permission for the Puja committees. *—ANI*

AI Boeing 787-9 flight aborts take off from Delhi

NEW DELHI, 31 JULY

An Air India Boeing 787-9 aircraft bound for London aborted take-off at Delhi Airport on 31 July, due to a suspected technical issue. The cockpit crew discontinued the take-off run as a precaution and returned the aircraft to the bay for checks. Passengers are being accommodated on an alternative flight, with ground staff providing assistance.

The incident coincides with the Indian government's disclosure that eight air accidents have occurred in 2025 so far, resulting in 274 fatalities.

These include a major Air India crash on 12 June that claimed 260 lives. Minister of State for Civil Aviation, Murlidhar Mohol, informed Parliament that the Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau is currently investigating all cases. The accidents involve one scheduled aircraft, three trainee planes, and four helicopters. Notable incidents include fatal crashes in Gujarat & Uttarakhand. *—PTI*

Justice not done, say kin of Malegaon victims

No proof Abhinav Bharat funded terror activities, says court; slain 10-yr-old's father vows to move SC

MUMBAI, 31 JULY

The verdict of the trial court in the 2008 Malegaon blast was "wrong" and he will move even the Supreme Court to get justice if necessary, said the father of Farheen (10), the youngest victim of the tragedy, on Thursday.

67-year-old Liyaqat Shaikh was speaking to media persons in Malegaon after the special NIA court in Mumbai acquitted all seven accused in the case including former BJP MP Pragya Singh Thakur and Lt Col Prasad Purohit.

Six people including his daughter Farheen were killed and 101 injured in the blast in the north Maharashtra town on 29 September, 2008.

Recalling the incident, Shaikh, a driver by profession, said Farheen had left house to buy `vada-pav' (a snack) at Bhikku Chowk on that day.

"I heard the sound of a blast. We lived near the blast site, in a tin-roof house. I got out of the house to look for my daughter but could not find her. It was dark outside. Somebody said there was a girl among the injured, so my wife and I went to the hospital where we found her in a bad situation," he said.

Then Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) chief Hemant Karkare had arrested the accused people with enough evidence, he said.

"The verdict of the court is wrong. We will go to the Supreme Court to seek justice," Shaikh added.

Nisar Ahmed, whose son Sayyed Azhar was one of those who died in the blast, said they did not get justice and will approach higher courts. Victims of any blast, whichever religion they may belong to, should get justice, he said.

File photo of the 29 September, 2008, blast site, where six people were killed and 101 injured; Inset: The bike allegedly used in the blast. The court noted it was not established that the vehicle was registered in the name of accused **PHOTO: PTI**

- Nisar Ahmed, who lost his son Sayyed Azhar, also said they did not get justice and will approach higher courts. Victims of any blast, whichever religion they may belong to, should get justice

Usman Khan, whose nephew Irfan Khan died in the blast, said Irfan drove an auto rickshaw and had gone out to have tea at Bhikku Chowk when the blast ripped through the place. He was shifted to Mumbai in a badly injured condition and died at the government hospital after 10 hours of treatment, Khan said. He was not happy with the verdict, he said.

"First some Muslims were arrested in the case, and they got a clean chit later. Now these people too were not convicted, so who was the culprit?" he asked. *—PTI*

Pragya Thakur: The 'sadhvi' who never was

Pragya Thakur was one of seven accused in the 2008 Malegaon blast that killed six and injured over 100. Arrested the same year, she was charged under UAPA and IPC for murder and conspiracy, with the NIA alleging her role in a wider plot to incite communal violence. A self-proclaimed "sadhvi" and former ABVP member, Thakur claimed to have taken sanyas in 2006.

Despite the charges, the BJP fielded her in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections from Bhopal, where she defeated Congress leader Digvijaya Singh by over 364,000 votes. She later sparked controversy by calling Nathuram Godse a "patriot".

BJP demands Cong apology; probe was shoddy, says Oppn

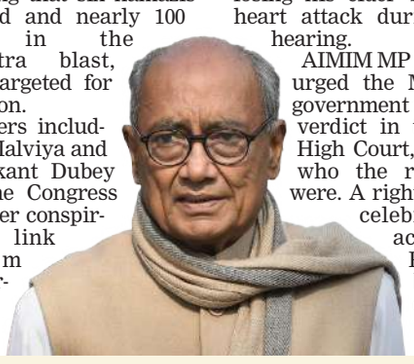
NEW DELHI/INDORE, 31 JULY

The BJP has hailed the acquittal of all seven accused in the 2008 Malegaon blast case as the collapse of the "Hindu terror bogey", demanding an unconditional apology from the Congress for allegedly maligning Sanatan Dharma.

Senior Congress leader Digvijaya Singh maintained that "terrorism should not be associated with any religion" and "no faith advocates violence". However, AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi alleged the acquittals resulted from a "deliberately shoddy investigation", noting that six namazis were killed and nearly 100 injured in the Maharashtra blast, allegedly targeted for their religion.

BJP leaders including Amit Malviya and MP Nishikant Dubey accused the Congress of a "sinister conspiracy" to link Hinduism with terrorism. Malviya said the verdict morally indicts those who falsely labelled innocent people as terrorists for political gain. Maharashtra CM Devendra Fadnavis declared, "Terrorism was never saffron and will never be," while Deputy CM Eknath Shinde said the ruling had "wiped off the stigma" from the Hindu community.

Madhya Pradesh CM Mohan Yadav and BJP leader Uma Bharti also demanded an apology from Digvijaya Singh. Indore businessman Shyam Sahu, discharged in 2017, blamed the Congress for using terms like "saffron terror" to appease a section of society, and recalled losing his elder brother to a heart attack during a court hearing.



AIMIM MP Imtiaz Jaleel urged the Maharashtra government to appeal the verdict in the Bombay High Court, questioning who the real culprits were. A right-wing group celebrated the acquittal in Pune by bursting crackers. *—PTI*

Who is responsible for blast? Outfit that helped victims

MUMBAI, 31 JULY

An organisation that supported families of the 2008 Malegaon blast victims has expressed deep disappointment over the acquittal of seven accused, questioning who was truly responsible for the attack if not them.

Kul Jamat-e-Tanzeem's in-charge, Firoz Ahmed Azmi, voiced shock over the verdict, saying, "The people who died did not get justice. If these accused weren't involved, then who carried out the blast?"

The blast occurred on 29 September 2008 near a mosque in Malegaon, around 200 km from Mumbai. A bomb strapped to a motorcycle exploded, killing six and injuring 101 others.

Azmi recalled that after the 2006 Malegaon blasts, the organisation had consistently urged authorities to investigate in the right direction. He

credited then Maharashtra ATS chief Hemant Karkare with conducting a thorough investigation after the 2008 attack. "We were happy the probe was going the right way. For 17 years, agencies worked on this case, and we believed they had strong evidence," he said.

Despite that, the special court on acquitting the accused, including Lt Col Prasad Purohit and Sadhvi Pragya Singh Thakur, said the prosecution failed to prove their involvement.

While acknowledging that Right-wing group Abhinav Bharat had distributed funds, the court ruled there was no evidence the money financed terror activities. It noted Purohit appeared to have used the funds to build a house.

The court also said there was no evidence that Purohit stored or assembled explosives, or that meetings in Bhopal and Nashik, where the alleged conspiracy was planned, ever took place—since no witnesses corroborated this claim. *—PTI*

'I HEARD THE SOUND OF A BLAST... I GOT OUT OF THE HOUSE TO LOOK FOR MY DAUGHTER BUT COULD NOT FIND HER'

TIMELINE OF EVENTS IN 2008 MALEGAON BLASTS CASE

29 Sept, 2008: A bomb on a motorcycle goes off at Malegaon in Maharashtra's Nashik district. Six people killed and 101 injured.

30 Sept, 2008: FIR lodged at Azad Nagar Police station in Malegaon.

21 Oct, 2008: Maharashtra's Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) takes over probe.

23 Oct, 2008: ATS arrests Sadhvi Pragya Singh Thakur and three others. Claims blast was carried out by right-wing extremists.

Nov 2008: Lt Col Prasad Purohit arrested by ATS.

20 Jan, 2009: ATS files charge-sheet against 11. Accused are charged under Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act (MCOCA), Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) and Indian Penal Code (IPC). Ramji alias Ramchandra Kalsangra and Sandeep Dange are wanted accused.

July 2009: Special court says provisions of MCOCA are not applicable and the accused shall be tried by Nashik court.

August 2009: M'rashtra govt moves Bombay High Court against special court order.

July 2010: Bombay HC overturns special court order.

August 2010: Purohit and Pragya move Supreme Court.

1 Feb, 2011: ATS Mumbai arrests Pravin Mutalik. Total 12 people arrested.

13 April, 2011: National Investigation Agency (NIA) takes over case.

Feb and Dec 2012: NIA arrests two more - Lokesh Sharma and Dhan Singh Chaudhary.

April 2015: SC sends back case to special court to reconsider MCOCA.

13 May, 2016: NIA files charge-sheet and drops MCOCA charges. Gives clean chit to seven accused.

25 April, 2017: Bombay HC grants bail to Pragya, refuses bail to Purohit.

21 Sept, 2017: Purohit gets bail from SC. By year end, all arrested accused are out on bail.

27 Dec, 2017: Special NIA court discharges accused Shivnarayan Kalsangra, Shyam Sahu and Praveen Mutalik Naik.

30 Oct, 2018: Charges framed against seven - Thakur, Purohit, Ramesh Upadhyay, Sameer Kulkarni, Ajay Rahirkar, Sudhakar Dwivedi and Sudhakar Chaturvedi. They face trial under UAPA for a terror act, and under IPC for criminal conspiracy and murder.

3 Dec, 2018: Trial begins with the examination of first witness.

14 Sept, 2023: 323 prosecution witnesses examined (37 turned hostile).

19 April, 2025: Special court closes trial for judgment.

31 July, 2025: Special NIA Judge A K Lahoti acquits all seven accused.

Doc accuses Malayalam rapper Vedan of rape

KOCHI, 31 JULY

A rape case has been lodged against well-known Malayalam rapper Vedan, also known as Hirandas Murali, on a complaint by a lady doctor alleging that he sexually assaulted her on several occasions from 2021 to 2023, police said on Thursday. Based on her accusations, an FIR was filed on Wednesday.

Kochi police Commissioner Putta Vimaladitya told reporters here that the investigation was in the initial stages and no notice has been sent to the rapper yet. He said that according to the survivor's complaint, there were financial transactions between her and Vedan. "We need to verify all the allegations. We need to speak to people whose names have been mentioned in the complaint. Thereafter, we will take further steps," he added.

Vedan was arrested in April, 2025 in a drug related case and was later released on bail. Shortly thereafter, he was arrested and then released on bail by the Forest Department in connection with a leopard tooth found in his possession. *—PTI*

CEC for changing Sariska Tiger Reserve boundaries

NEW DELHI, 31 JULY

The Supreme Court-mandated Central Empowered Committee (CEC) has recommended approving the rationalisation of boundaries of the Sariska Tiger Reserve in Rajasthan, including its critical tiger habitat, despite environmentalists' concerns that the move could pave the way for legalising mining operations previously halted by the top court.

The recommendations have been made in the CEC's interim compliance report filed on 22 July, 2025, in connection with the suo motu application

filed by Amicus Curiae K Parameshwar.

His application highlighted several conservation and management challenges in Sariska, including the unrestricted movement of pilgrims to the Pandupole Hanuman Temple, fragmented tiger habitats and disputes involving mining in the eco-sensitive zone.

In previous rulings in 2023 and 2024, the apex court had established an expert committee and mandated the CEC to develop comprehensive solutions.

The CEC's latest report noted that the Standing Committee of the National Board for Wildlife, headed by Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav, has already approved the proposal to alter the boundaries of the tiger reserve by expanding the critical tiger habitat while reducing the buffer zone. *—PTI*

ED conducts maiden raids in Andaman in bank 'fraud'

PORT BLAIR/NEW DELHI, 31 JULY

The Enforcement Directorate on Thursday conducted its first-ever searches in Andaman and Nicobar Islands as part of a money laundering case probe linked to an alleged Co-operative Bank loan 'fraud' involving a former Congress MP from the Union Territory, official sources said.

Nine places in and around Port Blair and two in Kolkata were raided by ED officials under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), the sources said. This is the first time that the central agency has undertaken searches under the anti-money laundering law in the UT. The case pertains to the Andaman Nicobar State Cooperative Bank (ANSCB) and its former vice chairman and former Congress MP Kuldeep Rai Sharma, 57.

He was arrested by the Andaman and Nicobar Police on 18 July from a local hospital as part of the The Enforcement Directorate's investigation. On 29 July, a court in Port Blair court sent him to three days of police custody.

Seven others, including an MD and an employee of the bank, have been arrested in relation to the alleged money laundering scam. *—PTI*

UP's Darul Uloom bans women's entry on campus

SAHARANPUR, 31 JULY

Darul Uloom Deoband has reinstated a ban on entry of women on its campus after some women visitors shot videos and shared them on social media platforms. The seminary said that they not only did 'bepardgi' (breach norms of remaining under the veil) but also tarnished the institution's image. A complete ban on video recording and photography on the campus was imposed. The decision has disappointed many women who visit the seminary to see its historic buildings, the famous Rashidiya Mosque, and its distinctive circular library. Use of tobacco and intoxicants, spitting, and touching or plucking of plants were also prohibited. Visitors have to vacate the premises before sunset. *—PTI*

CHINA'S ALIEXPRESS UNDER FIRE IN ODISHA FOR 'JAGANNATH' DOORMATS

BHUBANESWAR, 31 JULY

A major controversy erupted in Odisha as it came to light that Chinese e-commerce platform AliExpress was selling doormats featuring the image of Lord Jagannath.

Odisha's DyCM Pravati Parida criticised it as "offensive" on Thursday and took to X to say, "Mahaprabhu Jagannath is deeply connected to the soul and emotions of every Odia. I strongly condemn Chinese e-commerce platform @AliExpress_EN for selling doormats featuring Mahaprabhu Jagannath's image. @AliExpress_EN must remove the listing immediately and apologise to devotees for this offensive act."

AliExpress, in response to an X post by Odisha's Congress MLA Sofia Firdous, calling it a "blasphemous act," the response read, "The item has been reviewed and removed. Thank you for helping us create a safe and friendly online shopping experience". *—PTI*

Doormats with images of Lord Jagannath **PHOTO: X/ANSHUL SAXENA**

- AliExpress, in response to an X post by Odisha's Congress MLA Sofia Firdous, calling it a "blasphemous act," the response read, "The item has been reviewed and removed."

2 GENERATIONS, ONE DREAM

Mom–daughter duo from TN cracks NEET

CHENNAI, 31 JULY

In a rare coincidence and sheer determination as well, a 49-year-old physiotherapist and her daughter from Tamil Nadu cleared the NEET together. While the woman has secured a seat in the government medical college close to her home district, the girl is set to commence her journey.

"My ambition was rekindled after I saw my daughter prepare for NEET. She was my greatest inspiration. I borrowed her books and prepared for the exam," a jubilant Amuthavalli said, recalling how much the syllabus has changed, become tougher compared to her school days.

M Samyuktha, a CBSE student, had attended a coaching class, and the books she used had also helped her mother.

Samyuktha and her mother Amuthavalli **PHOTO: ANI**

"I found it easy to memorise when I recount what I have studied to someone. My father, being a lawyer by profession, was not interested in medicine. And since she hailed from a medical background, my mother was receptive," she said.

On 30 July, Amuthavalli, accompanied by her daughter, attended the counselling here,

- Amuthavalli, accompanied by her daughter, attended the counselling under the Persons with Benchmark Disabilities category, and preferred to join the government medical college in Virudhunagar, close to her place

under the Persons with Benchmark Disabilities (PwD) category, and preferred to join the government medical college in Virudhunagar, close to her native.

Samyuktha said, "I don't want to study in the same college as my mother. I wish to compete in the general quota and study elsewhere, maybe outside the state." *—PTI*

INDIA GETS BUDDHA RELICS AFTER 127 YRS

After being met with huge pressure from both the Indian government and global Buddhist leaders, auction house Sotheby has returned the Piprahwa gems, believed to be sacred jewels connected to Buddha's remains, back to India. Archaeologists stated that the gems, which were set to be auctioned in Hong Kong, were one of modern era's most surprising discoveries. As the Indian government was involved in the matter led to the auction being called off. The gems were acquired by Godrej Industries Group, an Indian conglomerate based in Mumbai. The relics are said to go on public display in India. The relics were found in 1898 but taken away from India during the colonial period

PHOTO: SOTHEBY

5 judges, 200 victims later justice eludes Malegaon

The trial in the 2008 Malegaon bomb blast case, which stretched over nearly 17 years, witnessed not only a change in investigating agencies but also five different judges presiding over various stages of the proceedings.

A special court on Thursday acquitted all seven accused, including former BJP MP Pragya Singh Thakur and Lt Col Prasad Purohit, noting there was "no reliable and cogent evidence" against them.

The investigation was initially conducted by the state Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS), which had pinned the blame on right-wing extremists who were members of "Abhinav Bharat" group.

The probe was later handed over to the NIA, which gave a clean chit to Thakur. However, the court conducted the trial against her, citing prima facie evidence.

From the initial remand of the accused to the filing of charge sheets, framing of charges, commencement of trial, and finally the verdict, the case passed through the hands of five judges between 2008 and 2025.

Both the victims of the blast and the accused cited this frequent change of judges as a significant factor in derailing the trial and contributing to the prolonged delay.

Sameer Kulkarni, one of the accused who was eventually acquitted, told PTI that this was among the longest-running trials.

He blamed both the prosecution and defence for failing to expedite the proceedings. Kulkarni had even filed a petition in the High Court seeking that the trial be fast-tracked.

Advocate Shaheed Nadeem, who represented several victims, acknowledged that the repeated transfer of judges had indeed hampered the trial.

The investigation was initially conducted by the state Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS), which had pinned the blame on right-wing extremists who were members of 'Abhinav Bharat' group ***PHOTO: PTI***

He pointed out that the voluminous case records meant each new judge had to start afresh, further delaying the process.

The first judge to preside over the case was Special Judge YD Shinde. He handled the initial remand of the accused, including former BJP MP Pragya Singh Thakur, Lt Col Prasad Purohit, and others.

In a significant ruling, Judge Shinde set aside the invocation of the Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act (MCOCA), observing that none of the accused were part of an organised crime syndicate.

He noted that the legal prerequisite for invoking MCOCA—that an accused must have more than one charge sheet filed against them—was not met. However, the Bombay High Court later reinstated the application of MCOCA following an appeal by the state government.

Following Shinde, special judge SD Tekale presided over the case from 2015 to 2018 until his transfer during annual judicial postings.

It was Judge Tekale who rejected the National Investigation Agency's (NIA) move to grant a clean chit to Pragya Thakur, asserting that there was prima facie evidence warranting her trial.

After Tekale, special judge VS Padalkar took over and, in October 2018, formally framed charges against Thakur, Purohit, and five others. The trial officially began under his tenure with the examination of the first witness.

Judge PR Sitre succeeded Padalkar after his retirement in 2020. However, the COVID-19 pandemic brought the trial to a temporary standstill.

Despite the challenges, Judge Sitre managed to examine 100 witnesses during his tenure of just over a year.

In 2022, when Sitre was slated for transfer, victims of the blast wrote to the then Bombay High Court Chief Justice Dipankar Datta, urging that the transfer be stayed to avoid further delays.

Following Sitre's transfer, special judge AK Lahoti took over the trial in June 2022. Till April 2025, Judge Lahoti continued the trial.

In April, when he was slated for transfer to Nashik, the victims again wrote to the then HC Chief Justice seeking a stay on the transfer as the trial was nearing completion.

Responding to their plea, Judge Lahoti's tenure as special NIA judge was extended until the end of August 2025, allowing him to complete the trial. *—PTI*

SALAR

SIR: This isn't verification. It is elimination

MANSOOR ALI KHAN

What's unfolding in Bihar right now under the pretext of electoral revision is neither routine nor fair. The so-called Special Intensive Revision (SIR) is not cleaning the voter rolls; it's gutting them. It's a bureaucratic bulldozer with no concern for reality, running over the very citizens whose rights it is supposed to protect.

At the heart of this process is a deeply flawed document requirement. Citizens are being asked to produce not just their birth certificates, but also those of their parents. This, in a state where birth registrations were barely systematic until recent decades.

Ration cards, voter IDs, and even Aadhaar, all of which have long been accepted as proof of identity, are being rejected in certain areas. Ironically, five of the eleven documents listed by the Election Commission do not even confirm the date or place of birth. What, then, is being verified?

Worse still, the rules are being applied unevenly. Reports confirm that while Aadhaar is accepted without issue in Patna, it is rejected in Seemanchal and other rural regions. This two-track system reeks of discrimination. It punishes the poor for being poor. It punishes rural voters for the state's failure to maintain documentation. And it raises very real concerns of targeting along class, caste, and community lines to suit the needs of those in power.

The numbers tell their own story. Over 65 lakh names have already been flagged for deletion — either marked as deceased, shifted, untraceable, or "foreign". In some districts like Araria and Kishanganj, entire clusters of voters have been categorised as "suspicious" without any notice or explanation. Many of these are daily wage earners and marginalised families who now face the threat of disenfranchisement — not for committing fraud, but for lacking papers they were never issued in the first place.

As elections approach in Bihar and other key states, the logic is plain: exclude the voters least likely to favour the ruling party. The poor, the marginalised, the migrant workers, and the religious minorities. These are the people being asked to prove their parentage in order to access a right they have exercised for decades.

One such case is that of 63-year-old Mohammed Saleem from Darbhanga, a flood-displaced worker who has voted at least five times in past elections. His name has now been marked for deletion because he cannot produce his father's birth certificate — his father died in 1978. An affidavit and decades of voting history should have been sufficient, but were dismissed. Saleem now fears he may lose not just his vote, but his voice.

Today, new voters and those added after 2003 are being asked to produce not only their own birth certificates, but also those of their parents. For many rural and working-class families, this is an impossible task — pushing them out of the electoral envelope altogether. Meanwhile, identity cards such as Aadhaar, voter ID, and ration cards are being accepted in urban areas but disallowed in rural Bihar. This double standard penalises the very individuals the state has failed to reach with documentation and services.

When the opposition raised these points in Parliament, the government refused to hold a discussion. The silence is telling.

The Election Commission once enjoyed a hard-won reputation for impartiality. That reputation is eroding — not because of a single act, but because of a pattern. A pattern of opacity, of ignoring genuine concerns, of allowing large-scale exclusion while pretending everything is procedural. When institutions claim neutrality but respond selectively, they cease to be arbiters and begin to resemble actors.

Voter verification is important. No one is disputing that. But the process must be transparent, inclusive, and humane. Verification that results in the large-scale deletion of legitimate voters is not a form of verification. It is elimination.

The right to vote is not something to be filtered through backroom forms or outdated registries. It is the backbone of our democracy. Every name removed unjustly is a voice silenced — and every voice silenced is a crack in the foundation of this republic.

What we need now is corrective action, not bureaucratic arrogance. The Election Commission must clarify the list of accepted documents, extend the objection deadline beyond 1 September, and issue clear, uniform instructions across all regions. A draft roll alone will not suffice. People should not have to fight their government just to remain on the rolls.

This isn't verification — it's elimination. And if three crore voices can be silenced by paperwork, what part of democracy are we still pretending to uphold?

Mansoor Ali Khan
is the AICC
Secretary

Ration cards, voter IDs, and even Aadhaar, all of which have long been accepted as proof of identity, are being rejected in certain areas ***PHOTO: PTI***

LETTERS

write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

An explainer on the impact of Trump's tariffs on Indian businesses

US President Donald Trump on Wednesday announced the imposition of a 25 per cent additional import duty plus penalty on goods imported from India.

The duty will come into effect from 1 August. The unspecified penalty was imposed on India for purchasing crude oil and military equipment from Russia.

The announcement came as a surprise, as the two countries are negotiating a trade agreement. Here is a list of questions and answers (Q&A) to explain the impact of the US move:

Q: What is a tariff?
These are customs or import duties imposed on the import of goods. The importer has to pay this duty to the government. Normally, companies pass on these taxes to end users.

Q: How much tariff is announced on India?
The US has announced to impose a 25 per cent tariff plus penalty for buying Russia's crude oil and military equipment. However, the US has not specified the quantum of the penalty and how it will be imposed. An executive order from the White House on the 25 per cent tariff plus penalty will give clarity on the duty structure. A 10 per cent duty, announced on 2 April, applies to all goods.

Besides, there is a 50 per cent tariff on steel and aluminium, and 25 per cent on auto and auto parts. These duties are imposed over and above the existing tariffs on Indian goods. For example, textiles attract a 6-9 per cent tariff at present, so after adding the 25 per cent, Indian textile goods entering the US from 1 August, will attract a 31-34 per cent duty. A penalty could be added further on this.

Q: Why is the US imposing these tariffs?
The US has alleged that it faces a significant trade deficit with India, blaming New Delhi for imposing high tariffs on American goods, which it says restricts US exports to the Indian market.

Q: What is bilateral trade between India and the US?
During 2021-25, the US was India's largest trading partner in goods. The US accounts for about 18 per cent of India's total exports, 6.22 per cent in imports, and 10.73 per cent in bilateral trade. In 2024-25, the bilateral trade touched USD 186 billion, with USD 86.5 billion exports and USD 45.3 billion imports.

With America, India had a trade surplus (the difference between imports and exports) of USD 41 billion in 2024-25. It was USD 35.32 billion in 2023-24 and USD 27.7 billion in 2022-23.

In services, India exported an estimated USD 28.7 billion and imported USD 25.5 billion, adding a USD 3.2 billion surplus.

Altogether, India ran a total trade surplus of about USD 44.4 billion with the US.

The penalty was imposed on India for purchasing crude oil and military equipment from Russia ***PHOTO: PTI***

However, according to think tank GTRI, the US runs a USD 35-40 billion overall surplus when revenues from education, digital services, financial activities, royalties, and arms trade are factored in.

Q: What are the major products traded between the two?
In 2024, India's main exports to the US included drug formulations and biologicals (USD 8.1 billion), telecom instruments (USD 6.5 billion), precious and semi-precious stones (USD 5.3 billion), petroleum products (USD 4.1 billion), vehicle and auto components (USD 2.8 billion), gold and other precious metal jewellery (USD 3.2 billion), ready-made garments of cotton, including accessories (USD 2.8 billion), and products of iron and steel (USD 2.7 billion).

- The US accounts for about 18 per cent of India's total exports, 6.22 per cent in imports, and 10.73 per cent in bilateral trade. In 2024-25, the bilateral trade touched USD 186 billion, with USD 86.5 billion exports and USD 45.3 billion imports.

Imports included crude oil (USD 4.5 billion), petroleum products (USD 3.6 billion), coal, coke (USD 3.4 billion), cut and polished diamonds (USD 2.6 billion), electric machinery (USD 1.4 billion), aircraft, spacecraft and parts (USD 1.3 billion), and gold (USD 1.3 billion).

Q: What will be the impact of the tariffs on this trade?
Import duty makes goods expensive in the importing country. Besides, a few other factors also play a role in this. For example, duty on India's competitor nations such as Bangladesh (35 per cent), Vietnam (20 per cent) and Thailand (36 per cent); and quality and standards of items.

According to exporters, Indian labour-intensive goods such as garments, leather and non-leather footwear, gems and jewellery, carpets and handicrafts may get impacted due to this duty.

Q: What will be the US tariffs on key Indian goods from 1 August?
Telecom - 25 per cent; gems and jewellery - 30-38.5 per cent (5-13.5 per cent at present); food and agri goods - 29-30 per cent (14-15 per cent currently); apparel 12 per cent plus 25 per cent. Penalty component may also be there from 1 August.

Q: Is there a substance on Trump's allegations that India has very high tariffs?
According to experts, no. The US also imposes high duties on items like dairy products (188 per cent), Fruits and vegetables (132 per cent), Coffee, tea, cocoa and spices (53 per cent), Cereals and food preparations (193 per cent), Oilseeds, fats and oils (164 per cent), beverages and tobacco (150 per cent), Minerals and metals (187 per cent), and Chemicals (56 per cent).

India's average tariff rate of 17 per cent is higher than the US's 3.3 per cent, but similar to other major economies like South Korea (13.4 per cent) and China (7.5 per cent). *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

US Navy's F-35C crashes in CA, pilot ejects safely

CALIFORNIA, 31 JULY

A US Navy F-35C fighter jet crashed near Naval Air Station Lemoore in central California on Wednesday at around 6.30pm local time, according to a Navy statement cited by CNN. "The pilot ejected safely," the statement confirmed, adding that the cause of the crash is under investigation. Video from CNN affiliate KFSN showed flames and thick black smoke rising from flat farmland approximately 40 miles (64 km) southwest of Fresno. Local EMS crews treated the pilot, and Cal Fire responded, said the Fresno County Sheriff's Office. The jet, worth around $100 million, belonged to Strike Fighter Squadron VF-125, known as the "Rough Raiders." It is the second F-35 crash this year. The aircraft faces ongoing scrutiny over maintenance and readiness. *—ANI*

At least 31 die as rains flood Beijing old age home

BEIJING, 31 JULY

A group of elderly people trapped in a flooded nursing home were among at least 70 people who died during powerful storms that lashed Beijing and neighbouring provinces. Officials said Thursday, 31 people died at the Taishitun Town Elderly Care Centre when Beijing's Miyun district became one of the hardest hit areas by storms that dumped nearly a year's worth of rain in the area over a few days. When the floods hit on Monday, there were 77 people in the building. Officials offered a rare public apology when they announced the deaths. "For a long time, this senior centre was in the town's centre and was safe, and as such was not included in the preparedness plans. This means our plans had holes," Miyun Party secretary Yu Weiguo said. *—PTI*

Moscow hosts Syria's first FM post Assad ouster

MOSCOW, 31 JULY

Russia's Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov met Syrian Foreign Minister Asaad al-Shibani in Moscow on Thursday, marking the first official visit by Damascus's new government since Bashar Assad's ouster last year. Lavrov expressed hope that Syria would "overcome all existing challenges and fully normalise the situation," while al-Shibani said Syria sought close ties with Russia and wanted Russia "by our side." Despite Assad's retreat to Russia after the civil war, Damascus's interim government has adopted a pragmatic approach to Moscow. Al-Shibani praised Russia's stance against Israeli strikes and called for support in Syria's post-Assad "transitional justice" process. *—PTI*

Pakistan launches climate satellites from China

ISLAMABAD, 31 JULY

Pakistan on Thursday launched a new remote sensing satellite from China aimed at enhancing its capacity to monitor and respond to climate change-related threats. The satellite was launched from the Xichang Satellite Launch Centre in China with technical support from Pakistan's Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (SUPARCO), which played a key role in the launch. "The Satellite is expected to play a critical role in addressing pressing challenges including floods, landslides, glacier melt and deforestation," according to state-run Radio Pakistan. URAAN Pakistan is a transformative initiative designed to spotlight and advance crucial projects and reforms set forth in the country's national economic transformation plan. *—PTI*

Trump slaps 50% tariffs on Brazil

The executive order will apply additional 40% on the existing baseline of 10% being levied

WASHINGTON/ BEIJING, 31 JULY

US President Donald Trump on Wednesday signed an executive order to impose his threatened 50 per cent tariffs on Brazil, setting a legal rationale that Brazil's policies and criminal prosecution of former president Jair Bolsonaro constitute an economic emergency under a 1977 law.

The order would apply an additional 40 per cent tariff on the baseline 10 per cent tariff already being levied by Trump. But not all goods imported from Brazil would face the 40 per cent tariff: Civil aircraft and parts, aluminium, tin, wood pulp, energy products, and fertilisers are among the products being excluded.

The order said the tariffs would go into effect seven days after its signing on Wednesday.

Trump had threatened the tariffs 9 July in a letter to President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva. Trump appears to identify with Bolsonaro, who attempted to overturn the results of his 2022 loss to Lula. Similarly, Trump was indicted in 2023 for his efforts to overturn the results of the 2020 US Presidential election.

Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva and US President Donald Trump *PHOTO: X*

The US has also imposed sanctions on Brazilian Supreme Court Justice Alexandre de Moraes, who is overseeing former president Jair Bolsonaro's ongoing coup trial

Lula vowed to defend "the sovereignty of the Brazilian people."

A statement by the White House said Brazil's judiciary had tried to coerce social media companies and block their users, though it did not name the companies involved; X and Rumble.

"The Order declares a new national emergency using the President's authority under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act of 1977 (IEEPA) and establishes an additional 40 per cent tariff to address Brazil's unusual and extraordinary policies and actions harming US companies, the free speech rights of US persons, US foreign policy, and the US economy," it noted.

S KOREA GETS 15% TARIFFS

Trump also announced a 15 per cent tariff on South Korea, down from the 25 per cent earlier threatened. In response, South Korea will not charge tariffs on the US, Trump said.

The deal, which will also see Seoul invest $350bn in the US, has been touted as a success in South Korea - especially given the record trade surplus of at least $56bn with Washington last year. *—PTI/ANI*

US urging citizens to migrate to a private health tracking system

WASHINGTON, 30 JULY

The Trump administration is pushing an initiative for millions of Americans to upload personal health data and medical records on new apps and systems run by private tech companies, promising that will make it easier to access health records and monitor wellness.

Leaders from more than 60 companies, including major tech companies such as Google and Amazon, as well as prominent hospital systems like the Cleveland Clinic, will convene at the White House to discuss what the administration is calling a "digital health ecosystem."

The new system will focus on diabetes and weight management, conversational artificial intelligence that helps patients, and digital tools such as QR codes and apps that register patients for check-ins or track medications.

The initiative, spearheaded by an administration that has already freely shared highly personal data about Americans in ways that have tested legal bounds, could put patients' desires for more convenience at their doctor's office on a collision course with their expectations that their medical information be kept private.

However, digital privacy advocates are skeptical that patients will be able to count on their data being stored securely. "The federal government has done little to regulate health apps or telehealth programs," said Jeffrey Chester at the Center for Digital Democracy. *—PTI*

Kamala won't run for California Guv in 2026; 3rd run for Prez?

LOS ANGELES, 30 JULY

Former vice president Kamala Harris will not run for California Governor next year, leaving open the possibility that she could mount a third run for the White House in 2028.

"I have given serious thought to asking the people of California for the privilege to serve as their governor. I love this state, its people and its promise. It is my home. But after deep reflection, I've decided that I will not run for Governor in this election," she said in a statement.

"For now, my leadership — and public service — will not be in elected office. I look forward to… helping elect Democrats across the nation, and sharing more details in the months ahead about my own plans," Harris added. *—PTI*

Extremist Joe Kent to lead counterterrorism agency

The Senate confirmed President Donald Trump's pick to lead the National Counterterrorism Center, Joe Kent, looking past his connections to right-wing extremists and support for conspiracy theories about the 6 January, 2021, riot at the US Capitol. As the head of the National Counterterrorism Center, he will oversee an agency tasked with analysing and detecting terrorist threats. In the role, he plans to devote agency resources to targeting Latin American gangs and other criminal groups tied to migration. Kent had already been working for Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard.

US wants millions in Covid relief back from states

The US Treasury is seeking to recoup Covid-19 pandemic relief funds from hundreds of local governments that received millions of dollars but never complied with requirements to report how they used the money. The federal government distributed USD 350 billion to state, local, territorial and tribal governments in 2021. Governments had until the end of 2024 to obligate the money for specific projects and were supposed to file either quarterly or annual progress reports. While, most complied, about 1,000 mostly smaller governments had failed to file any reports with the Treasury detailing how they used a total of USD 139 million.

Rescuers work in a destroyed apartment building after a Russian missile attack in Kyiv, Ukraine, on Thursday *PHOTO: PTI*

Nine people die as Russia strikes Kyiv

KYIV, 31 JULY

Russia attacked Ukraine's capital with missiles and drones overnight, killing at least nine people including a six-year-old boy and wounding 124 others, authorities said on Thursday.

Ten children, the youngest being a 5-month-old girl, were among the wounded, Kyiv City Military Administration head Tymur Tkachenko said. A large part of a nine-storey residential building collapsed after it was struck, he said.

A large part of a nine-story residential building collapsed after it was struck, he said.

Rescue teams were at the scene, searching for people trapped under the rubble.

UKRAINE REPEALS CORRUPTION LAWS

Ukraine's Parliament has approved a bill tabled by President Volodymyr Zelenskyy that restores the independence of two of the country's key anti-corruption watchdogs, reversing his contentious move last week that curbed their power.

Lawmakers in Ukraine, approved Zelenskyy's new proposal with 331 votes and nine abstentions Thursday.

Last week's measure by President Zelenskyy to place the watchdogs under the oversight of the prosecutor general prompted protests from Ukrainians, the EU and international rights groups. *—PTI*

Canada, Malta to recognise Palestinian state

TORONTO, 31 JULY

Canada and Malta announced plans to recognise the Palestinian state in September, joining France and possibly the UK amid international efforts to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Canadian PMMark Carney said, "Canada will recognise the Palestinian state at the 80th UN General Assembly," contingent on Palestinian elections in 2026 without Hamas and demilitarisation.

> **Wow!... That will make it very hard for us to make a Trade Deal with them. Oh' Canada!!!**
>
> —Donald Trump, US President

Carney reaffirmed Canada's commitment to a two-state solution, supporting Israel's right to security. Malta's Prime Minister Robert Abela also confirmed Malta's recognition, describing it as part of "our efforts for a lasting peace in the Middle East."

Malta's Foreign Ministry official Christopher Cutajar said, "We have a duty to work to translate the concept of a two-state solution from theory into practice."

France's President Emmanuel Macron and UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer have announced intentions to recognise Palestine before September, subject to conditions like a ceasefire in Gaza.

Israel opposes a two-state solution and criticises the recognition moves, with Israel's UN ambassador calling such recognition "hypocrisy" that "legitimises terrorism." The UN conference continues to push for renewed efforts towards peace. *—PTI*

Israeli right-wing activists watch the northern Gaza Strip during a rally calling for the re-establishment of Jewish settlements in the Gaza Strip, near the border in southern Israel, on Wednesday *PHOTO: PTI*

ISRAEL KILLS AT LEAST 34 IN GAZA

Israel killed at least 34 Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, including 15 aid seekers, reported Al Jazeera. Sources at Nasser Medical Complex in Khan Younis said a young man from Rafah has died from starvation. Earlier, medics said the total hunger-related death toll since the start of the war stood at 154, including 89 children. *—Agencies*

Emergency in Myanmar ends, junta prepares for polls

NAYPYIDAW, 31 JULY

Myanmar's military junta brought the nearly five-year long state of emergency to an end on Thursday, ending what it imposed in 2021, eventually triggering a civil war. This move indicates the junta's intensifying preparations for national elections, scheduled for December.

However, the upcoming vote is being boycotted by opposition groups and has drawn sharp criticism from international observers.

The Junta declared state of Emergency in Myanmar, in February 2021, when the military ousted the civilian government led by Aung San Suu Kyi. This resulted in a complex civil war that has resulted in thousands of deaths.

Min Aung Hlaing, the junta Chief, gained enormous power over legislature, executive and judiciary after declaring emergency.

As he started touting elections recently, former lawmakers and other influential leaders ousted in the coup, have vowed to snub the elections.

Political analysts have predicted that Hling will continue to be the president (active president since the coup) or will remain as the chief of the armed forces. *—Agencies*

'CHAMBER OF HORRORS'

Ireland excavating mass grave may have found 800 bodies of kids

TUAM, 31 JULY

A mass grave that could have the remains of nearly 800 infants and young children – some of them in a defunct septic tank – is being excavated on the premises of a former home run by the Bon Secours Sisters, an order of nuns in Ireland.

The burial site has forced the Irish government and the Catholic Church to reckon with a legacy of having shunned unmarried mothers and separated them from their children, leaving them at the mercy of a cruel system. It was accidentally discovered by two boys about half a century ago. But the true horror of the place was not known until a local historian began digging deeper.

An archived picture of the home of Bon Secours Sisters, an order of nuns in Ireland *PHOTO: X*

Catherine Corless revealed that the site was atop a septic tank and that 796 deceased infants were unaccounted for. Her findings caused a scandal when the international media wrote about her work in 2014.

When test excavations later confirmed that an untold number of tiny skeletons were in the sewage pit, The then-prime minister Enda Kenny called it a "chamber of horrors." *—PTI*

IS & al-Qaeda threat intense in Africa, Syria: UN

UNITED NATIONS, 31 JULY

The threat from Islamic State and al-Qaeda extremists and their affiliates is most intense in parts of Africa, and risks are growing in Syria, which both groups view as "a strategic base for external operations," UN experts said in a new report.

Their report to the UNSC circulated Wednesday said West Africa's al-Qaeda-linked Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal-Muslimin group, known as JNIM, and East Africa's al-Qaeda-linked al-Shabab have continued to increase the territory under their control.

The experts said "the organisation's pivot towards parts of Africa continued" partly because of Islamic State losses in the Middle East. There are also "increasing concerns about terrorists returning to Central Asia and Afghanistan". *—PTI*

Turbulence grounds Delta flight, 25 injured

NEW YORK, 31 JULY

PHOTO: X

A Delta Air Lines flight from Salt Lake City to Amsterdam was hit by serious turbulence, sending 25 passengers to hospitals and forcing the flight to divert to Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport, the airline said.

The Airbus A330-900, which can seat over 250 people, landed around 7.45pm Wednesday. The airport fire department and paramedics met the flight.

The 25 passengers were taken to hospitals for evaluation and treatment, the airline said.

One passenger said people who weren't wearing seat belts were thrown about the cabin.

"They hit the ceiling, and then they fell to the ground," Leann Clement-Nash told ABC News. "And the carts also hit the ceiling and fell to the ground and people were injured. It happened several times, so it was really scary."

Delta said in a statement: "We are grateful for the support of all emergency responders involved."

Serious injuries from in-flight turbulence are rare, but scientists say they may be becoming more common as climate change alters the jet stream.

A man was killed when a Singapore Airlines flight hit severe turbulence in May 2024, the first person to die from turbulence on a major airline in several decades. *—PTI*

50% copper tariffs to have limited impact on India

India imported $288 million copper scrap from US but exported finished products worth $360 million

NEW DELHI, 31 JULY

The US has announced a steep 50 per cent tariff on imports of semi-finished copper and copper-based products from 1 August, a move which will have a limited impact on India's exports from this sector to America.

A White House executive order, dated 30 July, said that copper is being imported into the US in quantities and under circumstances that threaten to impair the national security of the US.

"...all imports of semi-finished copper products and intensive copper derivative products...shall be subject to a 50 per cent tariff. This tariff shall be effective with respect to goods entered for consumption, or withdrawn from warehouse for consumption, on or after 12.01am eastern daylight time on 1 August, 2025, and shall continue in effect, unless such action is expressly reduced, modified, or terminated," it said.

India exported copper products worth USD 360 million to the US in FY2025, including plates, tubes, and other semi-finished forms. These shipments will now be more expensive.

Commenting on the development, think tank GTRI said since the tariff applies uniformly to all countries, it creates a level-playing field among global suppliers.

"India is unlikely to face any specific disadvantage compared to others. Moreover, the impact on India's copper trade is limited," GTRI Founder Ajay Srivastava said.

India is a net importer of copper, with imports totalling USD 14.45 billion in 2024-25, far outweighing its exports. Its main suppliers include Chile, Indonesia, and Australia. Notably, India also imported USD 288 million of copper scrap from the US.

The USA's decision is aimed at reducing dependence on foreign copper, which Washington claims poses a risk to critical domestic sectors.

India exported copper products worth USD 360 million to the US in FY2025, including plates, tubes, and other semi-finished forms **PHOTO: AI**

- The Indian electronics industry has around two weeks breather from the proposed tariffs due to the pending review of a key section that covers technologies under the ongoing bilateral negotiations

Copper is a foundational raw material for electric vehicles (EVs), power grids, semiconductors, and defence electronics.

Additionally, the Indian electronics industry has around two weeks breather from the proposed tariffs due to the pending review of a key section that covers technologies under the ongoing bilateral negotiations.

When the US had imposed basic 10 per cent duty, technology products were exempted.

It is unclear whether 25 per cent duty will be imposed in addition to the existing 10 per cent baseline tariff. The exact quantum of the penalty is unclear.

Smartphones, especially the iPhone, are the biggest component of electronics exports from India to the US. *—PTI*

Trump move may hurt US healthcare system

NEW DELHI, 31 JULY

The Indian pharmaceutical industry has hit back strongly at the recent tariff announcement by US President Donald Trump, calling it a move that could hurt the American healthcare system more than India's economy.

Reacting to the US decision to impose a 25 per cent tariff on Indian goods, Dilip Kumar, the chairman of medical tourism at the Chamber of Commerce, said "We are exporters, especially of medical equipment, pharmaceuticals and disposables. The American market is dependent upon Indian and Chinese markets."

Kumar emphasised that the cost of treatment and medical procedures in the US will increase as a result of this move, directly affecting American citizens. "India won't be impacted, as we will go by the route of exporting to European countries. We can survive in the toughest times and bounce back," he added.

Namit Joshi, the chairman of Pharmexcil, said, "India has long been a cornerstone of the global supply chain for affordable, high-quality medicines, particularly in the generic drug market, where it supplies nearly 47 per cent of the US's pharmaceutical needs. Indian pharmaceutical companies play a key role in ensuring the affordability and availability of essential medications, including life-saving oncology drugs, antibiotics, and chronic disease treatments." *—PTI*

An unfortunate policy turn, says WB economist

NEW DELHI, 31 JULY

Former World Bank Chief Economist Kaushik Basu on Thursday said the US economic policy towards India has taken an unfortunate turn, noting that President Donald Trump's harsh stance against New Delhi appears baffling.

US President Donald Trump on Wednesday announced a 25 per cent tariff on Indian goods from August 1, amid signs of a stalemate in the ongoing bilateral trade negotiations between the two countries. "US economic policy towards India has taken an unfortunate turn," Basu said. "But the US trade deficit with India is just USD 41 billion, nowhere near the deficit with China (USD 270 billion) or even small countries like Vietnam (USD 113 billion)," Basu said.

He said President Trump also described India as a "big abuser." *—PTI*

SC recalls liquidation order of Bhushan Power & Steel

NEW DELHI, 31 JULY

In a significant development, the Supreme Court on Thursday recalled its controversial 2 May, verdict that had ordered liquidation of Bhushan Power & Steel Limited (BPSL) while setting aside a resolution plan of JSW Steel Limited for the ailing firm.

A bench comprising Chief Justice BR Gavai and Justice Satish Chandra Sharma observed that the 2 May, judgment, authored by Justice Bela M Trivedi, since retired, did not "correctly consider the legal position as has been laid down in the catena of judgments".

Earlier, a bench of Justice

Trivedi and Justice Satish Chandra Sharma had set aside a resolution plan of applicant JSW Steel Limited for BPSL, holding it illegal and in violation of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC).

The verdict had criticised the conduct of all key stakeholders in the resolution process, the resolution professional, the Committee of Creditors (CoC) and the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) for enabling what it termed a "flagrant violation" of the IBC.

On Thursday, a CJI-led bench said it was inclined to review the earlier judgment, which had quashed JSW Steel's resolution plan for the debt-ridden company.

In an open court hearing, the CJI expressed shock after he was intimated that there were as many as 25,000 workers presently working in the BPSL which has been revived by JSW Steel by infusing Rs 30,000 crore.

The bench said, "We should also look at the larger picture. 25,000 people cannot be thrown on the road." *—PTI*

Rupee gains 22P; returns from all-time low

MUMBAI, 31 JULY

The rupee recovered 22 paise from its all-time low to 87.58 (provisional) against the US dollar on Thursday, amid lower crude prices and suspected RBI interventions, after US President Donald Trump's announcement of 25 per cent tariffs on Indian imports and a penalty for buying Russian Crude.

Forex traders said the rupee, after plunging 89 paise, logging its steepest single-day fall in over three years on Wednesday, recovered some lost ground but the broader outlook remains cautious.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the domestic unit touched an intra-day high of 87.51 against the USD. *—PTI*

Markets, auto & IT decline on concerns over US tariffs

MUMBAI/NEW DELHI, 31 JULY

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty ended lower on Thursday after US President Donald Trump announced the imposition of a 25 per cent tariff on imports from India starting 1 August and an unspecified penalty for buying Russian crude oil and military equipment.

Halting its two-day rally, the 30-share BSE index declined 296.28 points, or 0.36 per cent, to settle at 81,185.58 after recovering some lost ground during the afternoon trade. During the morning session, the gauge tanked 786.71 points, or 0.96 per cent, to 80,695.15.

The 50-share NSE Nifty dropped 86.70 points or 0.35 per cent to 24,768.35.

PHOTO: ANI

From the Sensex firms, Tata Steel, Sun Pharma, Reliance Industries, Adani Ports, NTPC and Asian Paints were among the biggest laggards.

Additionally, textile, pharma, auto and IT stocks ended lower.

The BSE auto index dipped 0.35 per cent to 52,901.32.

Tracking a weak trend in these stocks, the BSE IT index declined 0.63 per cent to 34,808.58.

Sectors like textiles, pharmaceuticals, and automotive components are likely to be the most impacted and may see reduced investor interest in the short term. *—PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

Swiggy's net loss nearly doubles to ₹1,197 crore

NEW DELHI, 31 JULY

Food and e-commerce delivery platform Swiggy, which owns Instamart, on Thursday reported a widening of its loss on a consolidated basis at Rs 1,197 crore for the first quarter ended 30 June, 2025. The company had reported a loss of Rs 611 crore during the corresponding quarter a year-ago. However, its total income increased substantially to Rs 5,048 crore, from Rs 3,310 crore a year ago, a regulatory filing showed, even as expenses shot up to Rs 6,244 crore, from Rs 3,908 crore during the April-June quarter under review on a year-on-year basis. Swiggy's scrip closed at Rs 403.80, up 0.62 per cent from its previous close on the Bombay Stock Exchange. *—PTI*

Jane Street case: IT inspects brokerage firms

MUMBAI, 31 JULY

The Income Tax Department on Thursday conducted a survey operation at the premises of some broking companies as part of an alleged tax evasion probe against Jane Street, the US-based proprietary trading firm accused of market manipulation, official sources said. Sources said the department is undertaking a "verification" exercise in the backdrop of a recent Sebi action against Jane Street. In an interim order issued on 3 July, Sebi found Jane Street (JS) guilty of manipulating indices by simultaneously placing bets in cash along with futures and options markets to secure massive gains. *—PTI*

3RD RICHEST REALTOR

Gautam Adani's fortune dips 7% to ₹52K cr: Report

MUMBAI, 31 JULY

Gautam Adani's wealth from the realty business has declined 7 per cent to Rs 52,320 crore in the year till June 2025, making the billionaire the third wealthiest in the sector, a report said on Thursday.

Adani, who is among the wealthiest Indians with projects like Dharavi and Motilal Nagar redevelopments in the financial capital, is also set to be the wealthiest realty sector individual in the next five years, officials from Hurun Research and Grohe said, citing informal discussions.

At present, DLF's Rajiv Singh is the wealthiest on the Grohe-Hurun India Real Estate 150 list with a fortune of Rs 1.27 lakh crore and is followed by BJP leader and Maharashtra minister Mangal Prabhat Lodha with a Rs 92,340 crore wealth.

- Adani, who is among the wealthiest Indians with projects like Dharavi and Motilal Nagar redevelopments in Mumbai, is also set to be the wealthiest realty sector individual in the next five years

The cumulative value of the 150 companies in the list grew 14 per cent during the year, slowing down from a 70 per cent jump in the last year. Each of the 150 firms is valued at least at Rs 1,000 crore or above. *—PTI*

India's gold demand drops by 10% to 134.9 tonnes: WGC

MUMBAI, 31 JULY

India's gold demand fell by 10 per cent during the April-June quarter to 134.9 tonnes compared to 149.7 tonnes a year ago as record gold impacted affordability, the World Gold Council (WGC) said on Thursday.

In terms of value, gold demand witnessed a 30 per cent increase to Rs 1,21,800 crore during the second quarter of this calendar year, compared to Rs 93,850 crore in the same period of 2024, as prices breached the psychological Rs 1,00,000 per 10g mark for the first time, WGC said in its "Gold Demand Trends Q2 2025" report.

The surging gold prices impacted jewellery demand in the country, which declined by 17 per cent to 88.8 tonnes during the quarter under review as compared to 106.5 tonnes in the corresponding quarter in 2024.

PHOTO: FREEPIK

Meanwhile, gold prices fell Rs 500 to Rs 98,020 per 10g in the national capital on Thursday as rupee appreciation capped the price of the precious metal, according to the All India Sarafa Association.

In the national capital, gold of 99.5 per cent purity decreased Rs 400 to Rs 97,800 per 10g (inclusive of all taxes) on Thursday. *—PTI*

Starlink granted satellite licence, says Scindia

NEW DELHI, 31 JULY

Elon Musk's Starlink has received a licence to launch satellite internet services in India, with a framework for spectrum allocation in place for smooth deployment, announced Union Telecom Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia. The move coincides with India's 30th anniversary of its first cellular call in 1995.

Other companies like Eutelsat OneWeb and Jio SES are also awaiting spectrum allocation.

Scindia highlighted India's digital progress, with telephone connections reaching 1.2 billion, internet subscriptions increasing by 286 per cent to 970 million, and broadband growth soaring over 1,450 per cent. Mobile data costs have plummeted 96.6 per cent to Rs 8.9 per GB. He hailed the BSNL's revival, reporting back-to-back profits and extensive 4G deployment. *—PTI*

'GOT GREAT GENES'

American Eagle's new ad with Sydney Sweeney sparks debate

NEW YORK, 31 JULY

US fashion retailer American Eagle Outfitters wanted to make a splash with its new advertising campaign starring 27-year-old actor Sydney Sweeney. The ad blitz included "clever, even provocative language" and was "definitely going to push buttons", the company's chief marketing officer told trade media outlets.

And it did. The question now is whether some of the public reactions the fall denim campaign produced is what American Eagle intended.

Titled "Sydney Sweeney has great jeans", the campaign sparked a debate about race, Western beauty standards, and the backlash to "woke" American politics and culture.

PHOTO: AMERICAN EAGLE

Most of the negative reception focused on videos that used the word "genes" instead of "jeans" when discussing the blonde-haired, blue-eyed actor known for the HBO series "Euphoria" and "White Lotus".

Some critics saw the wordplay as a nod, either unintentional or deliberate, to eugenics, a discredited theory that held humanity could be improved through selective breeding for certain traits.

Marcus Collins, an assistant professor of marketing at the University of Michigan's Ross School of Business, said the criticism could have been avoided if the ads showed models of various races making the "genes" pun.Other commenters accused detractors of reading too much into the campaign's message. *—PTI*

Meta and Microsoft reap rewards of AI investments

NEW YORK, 31 JULY

Aggressive investment in artificial intelligence has propelled Meta and Microsoft to impressive financial results, sending their shares soaring after stellar quarterly reports.

Meta, the Menlo Park-based tech giant, reported Q2 earnings of $18.34 billion, or $7.14 per share, a 36 per cent increase from $13.47 billion a year earlier. Revenue rose 22% to $47.52 billion, beating analyst forecasts of $44.81 billion. The growth was driven by higher advertising revenue and increased user engagement across Meta's platforms—Facebook, Messenger, WhatsApp, Instagram, and Threads—which now boast 3.48 billion daily active users, up 6 per cent year-on-year. Following the announcement, Meta's shares jumped $81.87 to $777.08 in after-hours trading, heading for a record high.

CEO Mark Zuckerberg emphasised AI as central to Meta's future, stating, "Meta's vision is to bring personal superintelligence to everyone... I believe AI glasses will be the main way we integrate superintelligence." Despite facing an ongoing antitrust case threatening to break up WhatsApp and Instagram, Zuckerberg highlighted the company's $14.3 billion investment in AI firm Scale and the recruitment of its CEO, Alexandr Wang. Meta's workforce grew by 7 per cent to nearly 76,000 employees.

Meanwhile, Microsoft's flagship cloud computing platform Azure reported annual revenue growth of 34 per cent to $75 billion, cementing its role in the company's AI-focused strategy. For the fiscal fourth quarter, Microsoft posted profits of $34.3 billion, or $3.65 per share, surpassing analyst expectations of $3.37 per share. Revenue for the April-June period rose 18 per cent to $76.4 billion.

Despite record profits, Microsoft announced layoffs of approximately 15,000 employees this year.

CEO Satya Nadella recently described the layoffs as a necessary step amid the company's evolving priorities. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X/@CYGAMES

Malta to host Commonwealth Youth Games in 2027

NEW DELHI, 31 JULY

Malta will host the eighth edition of the Commonwealth Youth Games (CYG) in 2027, with more than 1000 athletes aged 14 to 18 from 74 nations and territories competing in eight sports, the governing body of the multi-sport event said on Thursday. The exact dates of the CYG were not announced by Commonwealth Sport, but it said it will be in late 2027. "Commonwealth Sport is delighted to announce that the 8th Commonwealth Youth Games will be hosted by Malta in late 2027. Malta 2027 will welcome approximately 1,150 athletes aged 14-18 from Commonwealth Sport's 74 nations and territories," Commonwealth Sport said in a release. "The award reflects Commonwealth Sport's commitment to taking the Youth Games to new countries and especially small and island nations. —*PTI*

Zinc Football Girls Academy launched in Rajasthan

JAIPUR, 31 JULY

Hindustan Zinc Ltd, in collaboration with the All India Football Federation (AIFF), on Thursday launched the Zinc Football Girls Academy in Zawar near Udaipur, Rajasthan. This is India's first technology-driven residential football training centre exclusively for girls, the company has claimed. The academy has enrolled its first batch of 20 under-15 players selected from across five states and will use F-Cube, a unique tech-enabled system for monitoring and developing football skills. The AIFF will provide strategic and technical guidance, including operational protocols, coaching support, and talent scouting assistance. —*PTI*

SNS Championship to be held in New Delhi

NEW DELHI, 31 JULY

The Senior National Squash Championship will be held in New Delhi from August 23 to 28, the Squash Rackets Federation of India (SRFI) announced on Thursday. "Our Senior National Championships are happening in Delhi in three weeks at the Dhyanchand Stadium. The exact dates of the event are August 23 to 28," said SRFI secretary general Cyrus Poncha in a media interaction here on Thursday. "Most of the top players are expected to participate in the event." The SRFI, in collaboration with tech giant HCL, also launched the HCL India Squash Tour 2025-26 on Thursday.—*PTI*

PHOTO: X/@PIASTRI

Oscar Piastri out to boost title bid in Budapest

DUBAI, 31 JULY

Oscar Piastri returns to the scene of his first victory at the Hungarian Grand Prix this weekend, seeking to stretch his lead in the title race over his McLaren teammate Lando Norris. The 24-year-old Australian, with six wins from 13 races this year, has a 16-point lead over Norris, but he is well aware of the potential pitfalls ahead. "I'm looking forward to going back to where I had my first win," said Piastri. "It's a great city and a cool track and a fun weekend so it will be nice, but once we are in the cars and out on track all that will be forgotten.", His victory last year came with the help of team orders.—*PTI*

5th Test: Gill's run out mars rain-hit day at the Oval

In the morning session, India lost Jaiswal and KL Rahul

THE OVAL, 31 JULY

India lost their captain, Shubman Gill, due to a suicidal run out, as intermittent rain allowed only six overs in the afternoon session on day one of the series-deciding fifth Test against England here on Thursday.

Having done all the hard work, Gill went for a needless single off Gus Atkinson, who picked up the ball on the follow-through and darted it into the stumps, leaving the Indian captain way out of his crease.

Soon after, the rain returned, resulting in the umpire taking the tea break at 4.10 pm local time.

In the morning session, India lost their openers Yashasvi Jaiswal (2 off 9) and KL Rahul (14 off 40) on a green top, but did well to reach lunch 72 for two.

On the greenest pitch of the series, the ball expectedly did seam around, but it was not swinging profusely.

Playing his first game of the series, Atkinson struck in his second over by having Jaiswal trapped in front. The on-field umpire did not give it out, but England reviewed successfully with the incoming ball going on to hit the stumps.

India made four changes to their playing eleven, bringing in a fit-again Akash Deep, Prasidh Krishna, Karun Nair, and Dhruv Jurel for Jasprit Bumrah, Anshul Kamboj, Shardul Thakur, and the injured Rishabh Pant.

Groundstaff cover the pitch during rainfall on the first day of the fifth Test cricket match between India and England
PHOTO: PTI

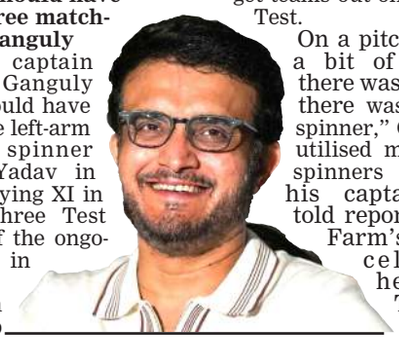
It will sell more tickets for Ashes: CEO Greenberg

Cricket Australia chief executive Todd Greenberg believes that the aggressive tone of the ongoing Test series between India and England will be a huge selling point for the match-day tickets of the upcoming Ashes.

The Ashes 2025-26 between Australia and England will begin in November, and Greenberg is hoping to go past the 837,879 gross fans footfall during the Border-Gavaskar Trophy 2024-25.

"It's great, isn't it? It's great cricket (India vs England series for Anderson-Tendulkar Trophy) to watch as a fan," Greenberg told Sydney Morning Herald.

Kuldeep should have played three matches, says Ganguly



Former captain Sourav Ganguly said he would have liked to see left-arm wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav in India's playing XI in at least three Test matches of the ongoing series in England.

"I wish Kuldeep had played in Manchester, Lord's, and even in Birmingham. Without quality spin, you will find it hard to get teams out on day five of a Test.

On a pitch which had a bit of rough and there was a bit of turn, there wasn't a quality spinner," Ganguly, who utilised match-winning spinners well during his captaincy days, told reporters at Bisk Farm's 25 years celebrations here on Thursday. —*PTI*

Mannepalli shocked the top seed Lee Cheuk Yiu of Hong Kong to storm into the quarterfinals
PHOTO: PTI

Tharun Mannepalli, Lakshya Sen enter QFs of Macau Open

MACAU, 31 JULY

India's Tharun Mannepalli shocked top seed Lee Cheuk Yiu of Hong Kong to enter the quarterfinals of the Macau Open along with compatriot Lakshya Sen here on Thursday.

Tharun rallied splendidly to outwit Lee, a world No. 15, 19-21, 21-14, 22-20 in a match that went past the hour-mark.

The 23-year-old, holder of a world No. 47 ranking, has now reached his second quarterfinal of a Super 300 tournament after entering the last eight at the German Open in February.

In the quarterfinals, Tharun will face world No. 87 Hu Zhe An of China.

Later, Commonwealth Games champion Lakshya Sen fought past Chico Aura Dwi Wardoyo of Indonesia 21-14, 14-21, 21-17 to enter the last-eight stage.

However, Ayush Shetty was ousted after an 18-21, 16-21 loss to Malaysia's Justin Hoh.

In the women's singles, India's Rakshitha Ramraj went down against Busanan Ongbam rungphan of Thailand 21-14, 10-21, 11-21 in a match that lasted 51 minutes.

In the mixed doubles, fifth-seeded Indian duo of Dhruv Kapila and Tanisha Crasto lost to Malaysia's Jimmy Wong and Lai Pei Jing 21-19, 13-21, 18-21.

In the men's doubles, Pruthvi Roy and K. Sai Pratheek lost to fourth-seeded Junaidi Arif and Roy King Yap of Malaysia 18-21, 18-21. In later matches, ace second-seeded men's doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty will meet Japan's Kakeru Kumagai and Hiroki Nishi. —*PTI*

NOT UNDER PRESSURE

I was trying to focus on my performance: Divya Deshmukh

NAGPUR, 31 JULY

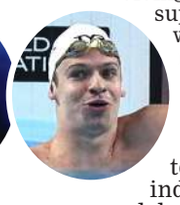
Grandmaster Divya Deshmukh on Thursday said she was not under any kind of pressure while playing the FIDE Women's World Cup final against compatriot Koneru Humpy as she had "nothing to lose".

Divya arrived here on Wednesday from Batumi, Georgia, to a reception befitting a world champion, with the young achiever overwhelmed by the affection shown by the people at the airport. The 19-year-old overcame the 38-year-old Humpy, a two-time World Rapid champion, in the time-controlled tie-break after the two classical rounds ended in draws. This was Divya's biggest success in her career and came after Humpy blundered in the second tie-breaker under time pressure. I never thought I was in any danger. I guess that the last blunder which she (Humpy) made, handed me the win," Divya told PTI Videos, when asked if she was under pressure in the final. No since I had no results in my hand. —*PTI*

McIntosh and Marchand dazzle for gold

SINGAPORE, 31 JULY

Summer McIntosh came within a whisker of breaking a long-standing world record and Leon Marchand failed to improve on a new mark he set just a night earlier, but both young guns won gold medals at the world championships in Singapore on Thursday.



Romania's David Popovici also flirted with a record on day five at the World Aquatics Championships Arena, the 20-year-old claiming a thrilling 100 metres freestyle gold to go with his 200 crown on day three. The 200 butterfly world record of 2:01.81 set by China's Liu Zige in 2009 is the last surviving mark from the supersuit era in women's swimming and McIntosh all but took it down.

She stormed to her third individual gold medal of the meet in 2:01.99, the second-fastest swim of all-time and a yawning three seconds better than American silver medallist Regan Smith. —*PTI*

Durand Cup: Robinson strikes winner

KOKRAJHAR, 31 JULY

Local side Bodoland FC registered their first win of the 134th Durand Cup with a hard-fought 2-1 victory over debutants Karbi Anglong Morning Star FC in a tightly contested Group D clash here on Thursday.

Karbi Anglong struck first through Nigerian forward Joseph Mayowa Olaleye (25th minute), but Bodoland responded swiftly with an equaliser from Gwgwmsar Gayary in the 37th minute.

Colombian striker Robinson (60th) calmly slotted home at the hour mark to secure all three points for the local side at the SAI Stadium. —*PTI*

30 teams to feature in Jr Women Nat'l Hockey C'ship

KAKINADA, 31 JULY

The 15th edition of the Hockey India Junior Women National Championship will begin here from Friday with 30 teams vying for top honours. The tournament, to be played in the newly introduced division-based format, will conclude on August 12, and the teams will be divided into three segments: A, B, and C.

The two bottom-placed teams in the A and B divisions will be relegated to the B and C groups, respectively, for the tournament's next year's edition.

Meanwhile, the top two teams of the B and C divisions will be promoted to the A and B clusters, respectively. Division A comprises the top 12 teams in the country and will feature defending champions Hockey Jharkhand in Pool A, last year's runners-up Hockey Madhya Pradesh in Pool B, and second runners-up Hockey Haryana in Pool C.

Meanwhile, Division B and Division C will comprise teams that are not in the top 12 national rankings, fighting to climb the ranks.

Hockey India President Dilip Tirkey said, "After the Senior Nationals and the Sub Junior Nationals, the new format will now be implemented in the Junior Nationals tournament. We have had positive outcomes from both the Senior and Sub Junior teams and are confident that the junior domestic players will be equally pleased playing this new format." —*PTI*

WACQ: Coach names 23-member squad

NEW DELHI, 31 JULY

India coach Joakim Alexandersson on Thursday named a 23-member squad for the 2026 AFC U20 Women's Asian Cup 2026 Qualifiers to be held in Yangon, Myanmar, from August 6-10.

The Young Tigresses are placed in Group D, and will face Indonesia on August 6, Turkmenistan on August 8, and host Myanmar on August 10 at the Thuwunna Stadium.

The group winners and the three best second-placed teams across all eight groups will qualify for the AFC U20 Women's Asian Cup that will be held in Thailand in April next year.

India had been training for the Qualifiers at the Padukone-Dravid Centre for Sports Excellence in Bengaluru, and as part of their preparations, they travelled to Tashkent to play two friendlies against Uzbekistan U20 earlier this month. Alexandersson's side earned a resounding 4-1 win in the second game after drawing 1-1 in the first, boosting their confidence ahead of the all-important Qualifiers.

The players continued their camp in Bengaluru after returning from Uzbekistan. They will depart for Myanmar on Thursday night. —*PTI*

PRO KABADDI LEAGUE'S 12TH EDITION TO BE PLAYED IN FOUR CITIES

MUMBAI, 31 JULY

The 12th season of the Pro Kabaddi League will be held across Visakhapatnam, Jaipur, Chennai, and New Delhi from August 29.

Telugu Titans will face Tamil Thalaivas, and Bengaluru Bulls will take on Puneri Paltan on the opening day of the new season at the Rajiv Gandhi Indoor Stadium in Visakhapatnam, the organisers said in a release on Thursday. "The PKL's return to Vizag marks an exciting homecoming for the coastal city after a seven-year hiatus," they said. "This Andhra Pradesh stronghold last witnessed the thrills of PKL action during the sixth season in 2018, adding another chapter to its rich legacy of hosting the league since seasons 1 and 3." The second leg of the PKL will be held in Jaipur's Indoor Hall at the Sawai Mansingh Stadium from September 12, a venue where the tournament has completed its 1,000 matches in the 2023-24 season.

The third leg will be held at the SDAT Multipurpose Indoor Stadium in Chennai from September 29, while the fourth and final leg will be at New Delhi's Thyagaraj Stadium from October 13.

The schedule for the playoffs will be announced later. —*PTI*

LEAGUES CUP

Messi lifts Inter Miami over Atlas 2-1

MIAMI, 31 JULY

Atlas defender Doria pursues Messi during the first half of a Leagues Cup group stage soccer match
PHOTO: X/@INTERMIAMICF

Lionel Messi had two assists, including one in the final seconds of the match, to help lift Inter Miami over Atlas 2-1 in their Leagues Cup opener.

It was Messi's first game since he and teammate Jordi Alba were suspended one match by Major League Soccer for skipping its All-Star game. He connected with Marcelo Weigandt for the winning score in the final minute of stoppage time.

"It's a competition that we always do well in," Messi said in Spanish during a post-match interview with Apple TV. "I think we did a great job against a great team."

Messi also assisted on Telasco Segovia's goal that opened the scoring. He received a through ball from Sergio Busquets and sent it to Segovia for an easy finish in the 58th.

Rivaldo Lozano scored the equalizer for the Guadalajara club in the 80th minute before Weigandt's goal in the 96th that had to be confirmed by VAR after he was originally ruled offside.

That meant five assists in July for Messi, who was named the Major League Soccer Player of the Month after netting eight goals and helping Miami go 4-1-1 in league play. —*PTI*

Patrik Schick dismisses team's title chances

LEVERKUSEN, 31 JULY

Bayer Leverkusen striker Patrik Schick says his team is not capable of fighting for the German Bundesliga title without new signings, after Granit Xhaka joined a string of title-winning players to leave the club. Former Manchester United manager Erik ten Hag is faced with an even bigger rebuild as Leverkusen's new coach after midfielder Xhaka joined English Premier League side Sunderland. Attacking midfielder Florian Wirtz, right back Jeremie Frimpong, and defender Jonathan Tah — all crucial to Leverkusen's league and cup double in 2024 left the club this off-season, and coach Xabi Alonso departed for Real Madrid."The most important players have gone and that hurts," Schick, who was Leverkusen's top scorer last season with 27 goals in 45 games, told Sky Sport Germany in an interview released late Wednesday. "Right now, we're hoping that we can still get a couple of good players in, because we're not currently in a position where we're capable of fighting for the title. —*PTI*